A Mine of Faults

B. M. F.

From L. M. M.

Christmas 1910.

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A Mine of Faults

By F. W. BAIN

Translated from the Original Manuscripts

A Digit of the Moon

And Other Love Stories
from the Hindu

A Draught of the Blue

together with

An Essence of the Dusk

An Incarnation of the Snow

A Mine of Faults

(दोषाकरसारातुष्टि)

Translated from the Original Manuscript

By

F. W. Bain

अथवा मोक्षिचस्वदृष्टिमयः पक्षीव मोक्षिचस्वदृष्टगटः

Was it a Swoon or the Wine in her Eyes?
Ha! the whole World is one Azure Abyss.

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DEDICATION

भार्यामातात्मजाप्रियास्वस्रदेवीशाशङ्खिनी
नरलोकप्राणाधिका प्रतीयते कुतोऽबला

sic barbare vertendum.

uxor-mater-amica-soror-dea-filia-concham
vas infirmius hanc, helleborose, vocas?

aut sic

What! this mother-sister-daughter-goddess-wife-secreting Shell
This, the weaker vessel, holding Love and Life and Heaven and Hell!

Introduction

Though the old literature of the Hindoos is deficient in the department of politics—it has no history, no orators, no Demosthenes, no Polybius, no Aristotle; for the dialectic of politics appears to have been invented by the divinely discontented Greek—though, I say, it has no politics, it is permeated with policy. The ancients, says Aristotle, wrote politically, but we rhetorically: and his remark is admirably illustrated by *e. g.* the old *Panchatantra,* whose author certainly had in him as much policy as Thucydides, although he chose to deliver his wisdom in apologues, rather than in the prosaic and somewhat pedantic photography of actual affairs. The Hindoo term, *níti,* means, not so much policy, as diplomacy, and so their *níti-shastra,* or doctrine of policy, refers rather to the clever conduct of

affairs in negotiation, than to anything else. And therefore, love-affairs, which we should hardly include under politics, fall in with the Hindoo conception, and in this sense women are, as the Hindoos think, and their annals abundantly testify, at least the equals, in policy, of men. When the author of *Eothen* commended certain women of the Ægæan isles for their admirable πολιτικη, he was using the term exactly in the sense of *níti*. And this correlation of diplomacy and love is the substance of the present story, the story of a love-affair, in which, if we may believe a great authority, the poet-king, Bhartrihari, the special quality required and exhibited is craft. The Hindoos in fact resemble women, and women the Hindoos, in this particular, that they are both of them apt to identify policy with craft, and like rivers, generally prefer to reach desired ends by crooked ways: and this is why both of them, though often very dexterous negotiators (like Wellington's "Old Brag," whom he thought superior to Talleyrand), have too much *finesse* to make really

solid statesmen. For intrigue may be good, in war, and it may be good, in love, but it is not good, save in a subordinate and secondary sense, in state-affairs. Nothing durable was ever built upon it. Strength is simple, but cunning is the weapon of the weak: and there is probably more consummate "policy," *i. e.* diplomacy and tact, exhibited by women in the conduct of their love-affairs in every century, than has ever been displayed by men on the great stage of politics in the whole of human history.

And though the title of our story, *A Mine of Faults,* might lead the reader to expect, not without alarm, something geological and mineral, and hard, and stony, it really plays lightly with a somewhat softer substance, which only disconsolate lovers in the depth of their dejection ever venture to compare with rocks or flints—a woman. For here, as usual, the Sanskrit epithet conveys two meanings in one word: being, in one sense, a poetic synonym of the Moon: the *maker of eve,* the *lender of beauty to the dusk:* while, according

to the other, it means a *mine,* or inexhaustible store, of *blemishes, defects,* or *faults.* And thus, as applied to a particular digit of the moon, that is, a lovely woman, it keeps the mind ambiguously hovering between her lustrous lunar beauty, and her *faiblesse:*[1] the malicious implication being, that she owes her attraction as much to her weakness as her beauty: a paradox, to which the modern world, anxious about the suffrage, seems disposed to turn at present a deaf ear. Dogmatism, on such a subject, would be dangerous and unbecoming: yet it would not be easy to deny that her faults and imperfections, even if they do not determine the attraction of the *vas infirmius,*[2] at least do not diminish, but increase it. *Infida, sed pulchra,* said the ancient of his mistress: who knows, whether she would have been quite so lovely in his eyes, had she

[1] There is yet a third application, to the book itself, indicative of the modesty of the author, with respect to the merits of his production.

[2] The ordinary Sanskrit term for woman is the exact equivalent, and may possibly be the origin, of this mediæval label, in which we detect homage and fear lurking under the disparagement.

been true? A doubt, or dispute, about possession lends value to the property, in every loser's eyes: and doubtless jealousy, while it diminishes and tarnishes affection, increases charm. And indeed, no philosopher has ever told us exactly what it is that excites the passion of the lover to his "most emphatic she." Take any man you will, and you will find that ninety-nine women in a hundred will leave him unelectrified, unmoved: the next, a very mine of faults, inferior, to every other eye than his, to her ninety-nine ineffectual sisters, will nevertheless act upon him so, that her very presence will send the blood rushing into his face—

> Up his cheek the colour sprang,
> Then he heard,

and for her sake, it may be, he will cast into the fire his family, his friends, his property, his honour, or his life, or whatever else is or is not his to cast. No analysis will discover to you the secret of the charm. And yet, let no man rashly call him mad, for is not every lover mad, and does not this touch of Nature

make the whole world kin? Only, each requires somewhat different ingredients, to make up that particular *mass of imperfections* that appeals to him. Who but a fool would fall in love with faults? Ah! but Nature, or as the old Hindoos would say, the Creator is so cunning; so well he knows how, by some almost imperceptible distinction, some unanalysable curve or touch or grain of composition, nay, by a spot, a fleck, a blemish, an irresistible defect, a "mole cinque-spotted," on the body or the soul, to turn even the sage into a fool. Explain it as we may, it is not perfection that has inspired the great passions of the world. Unless, indeed, anyone should choose to say, that perfection consists precisely in a mass of imperfections—and then he would agree with the author of this tale: the Moony-Crested God.

Being at Bombay, by accident, a little while ago, I went down to the harbour, as my custom is, to find a boat. But as it happened, such a gale was blowing from the

east, that not a boat would come. They were all cowering, as it were, huddled together on the lee side of the quay, dancing madly on the tossing waves, like corks. Here, however, as long ago in the case of the Macedonian Philip, silver arguments prevailed: and at last I put forth "in the teeth of the hard glad weather, in the blown wet face of the sea," with feelings which those only can appreciate who love the sea beyond all earthly things, and live away from it against their will. So, then, we fared on in the eye of the wind, tacking to and fro, and shipping half the water that we met. The race is very strong, in Bombay harbour, at the turn of the tide, in rough weather; we were crossing it aslant, and in the turmoil, our "patron" made a blunder with the tiller, which drew down upon his grey hairs such a storm of execration from his crew, who were baling for dear life, that in his confusion he lost his head and very nearly ended all. We got across, however, but the violence of the wind made it after all utterly impossible to make the north coast of Elephanta, where

the landing-stage is, and therefore I had to land where I could, upon the south.

I wandered through the woody isle, startling equally the monkeys, and the men who were constructing a new battery on the apex of the hill; who, taking my method of arrival, with the weather, into view, were strongly inclined, as I imagine, to consider me a Russian spy.[1] But finally that came about, which I had foreseen: when I reached the cave, for once I had it to myself. The weather had effectually protected it from all intrusion but my own: and those bands of pleasure seekers, who make it a place of horror and defilement, and desecrate its holy solitude, were missing. About it, and in it, was no noise whatever but the noise of the wind.

I went into the cave, and sat down, at the feet of Deity, close beside the shrine. It was growing late, for we had taken long to come, and dusk was beginning to settle over its dark interior recesses, making its projections stand

[1] As I subsequently gathered from my friend, the gallant officer in control, I ought to have been shot, hanged, or otherwise destroyed, for being there at all.

out strongly in the gloom. Just before me was the Marriage of Shiwa and Párwatí, dim and huge, upon the wall: the gigantic figure of the Great God, holding by the hand, to lead her round the sacred fire, the Daughter of the Mountain, whose attitude is a triumph of artistic skill: coy, bashful, and reluctant, with averted head, she seems as though unwilling to place her hand in his, to gain whom she had endured so many self-inflicted tortures. And a little way off, in the darkness, I could just discern the colossal Trimúrti, the three-headed bust of Shiwa, whose central countenance is filled with such majestic, beautiful, immense repose: divine, immortal calm. And all round me stood about, here and there, huge Dwarapálas, Pisháchas, grinning Kirttmukhas demons and lesser deities, satellites and servers and ministers of the Moony-Crested God.

And as I sat, so little, among those great Shadows, with the darkness growing deeper, in the silence, was it fancy, or did they whisper to one another: Who is this strange white-

faced unbeliever, who sits alone among us, as if half out of devotion, yet without the flowers, and the water, and the camphor, and the lamps, and the *mantras,* and all the other customary rites?

And I said in a whisper: O Moony-Crested, be not angry: for surely I was thy worshipper of old, in some forgotten former birth. And even now, is there among thy dusky millions, even one, who has so sincere a regard for thy dead divinity, and for that of thy delicious little snowy bride, as I? And at least I worship with true devotion the digit of the moon, that shines in thy tawny tangled hair.

So I made peace with those old ghosts, and we sat together in the darkness, and their Lord put a thought into my heart, as I gazed at him, while Bombay seemed to have faded away into another world.

And then, after a while, I got up: and I bowed to my Companions, and went away. The wind had dropped, and blew us gently

home. Night had fallen, before we reached the quay: lights and shadows came and went on the quiet water, dimpling round the tired boat. I stepped out, and disappeared in the motley crowd of English ladies, native coolies, Christians, pagans, Musulmans, Parsees, negroes, Arab horse-dealers, British sailors, and all the other national ingredients that it takes to make Bombay.

MAHABLESHWAR,
May, 1909.

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An Instrument of Policy

An Instrument of Policy

I

Hail to the Lord of the Moony Tire, whose throat derives its blue less from the Kalakuta which he drank but once to save the world, than from the cloud of colour that rests for ever like a ring around his neck, formed of dark glances from the shadowy eyes of the Daughter of the Snow, permanently fixed with indelible affection[1] *on his face!*

Long ago, as the God of gods was playing in the evening on the edge of an awful precipice in Himálaya with his wife, it happened, that, all at once, that lotus-eyed Daughter of the Snowy Mountain fell into

[1] The word here used for *indelible affection* means also *deep blue.*

a brown study. And Maheshwara, by his magic power, penetrated her thoughts. Nevertheless, after a while, making as if he did not know, he enquired of her politely: Of what is my beloved thinking, with such intense abstraction? And hearing him speak, Párwatí started, and blushed, and hesitated. And presently she said: I was but thinking of my Father.[1] And then, the Great God smiled. And he said, looking at her with unutterable affection: O thou Snowy one, I see, that thou also art but a mine of faults. Thou hast not told me the literal truth! For thou wast thinking, that thy own eyes resembled that great blue chasm in yonder ice, but that the eyes were superior. And it was true. Then Párwatí blushed again, while the god watched her with attention. And after a while, she said: Why didst thou say, that I also am a mine of faults? Then said Maheshwara: Every woman is a mine of faults, and thou art thyself a woman, al-

[1] *i. e.*, the Himálaya mountain. This was, in a sense true: and yet, she prevaricated.

though a goddess, being, as it were, Woman incarnate, the very type and pattern of them all. And it is very well. For if women had no faults, half their charm would disappear. For, *apropos,* thou hast already blushed twice, which thou wouldst not have done, at all, but for thy feminine preoccupation about thy own incomparable beauty, which led thee to compare thy lotus-eyes with the blue mountain ice, to its inferiority, and for thy shame, which led thee to endeavour to hide from me thy self-approval by telling me a fib. And thy blush is an ornament to thee, which I love to look at, resembling as it does the first kiss of early Dawn on thy father's snowy peaks.

And then, that lovely one blushed in confusion for the third time, deeper than before. And again she said: But why is every woman a mine of faults? Then said her lord: I could tell thee many instances to prove it, had I leisure: but as it is, just now, I have not time. And the goddess exclaimed: Out upon thee! Thou dost only tease me. What is Time to thee? Do I not know that thou thy-

self art Time itself? And she began to coax and wheedle and caress him, to gain her end, knowing her own power, and certain of success.

So then, after a while, Maheshwara said: See now, if even I, who am a god, even among gods, am utterly unable to resist the feminine cajolery incarnate in thy form, what are the miserable mortal men below to do, against it? Come, then, I will humour thee, by telling thee a tale. But first, I must provide against the mischief that would otherwise come about, by reason of my delay on thy account. For I can remedy the ill, which thou dost overlook, preferring thy own amusement to the business of the three worlds: but it is otherwise with men, who, cajoled and befooled by thy sisters in witchery below, often lose golden opportunities.

And then, by his magic power, he suspended the operation of the three worlds, so that everything, animate and inanimate, fell as it were suddenly into a magic sleep, and all action stopped, remaining suspended on the

very brink of coming into being, like a mountain waterfall suddenly turned to ice. And he said: When the story is told, I will release things from the spell, and all will go on just as it would have done before. For time, uncounted, is the same as none at all. And then, he turned towards his wife, and said: And now, where shall we sit, to tell and hear? Then she said: I will listen on thy lap, as thou roamest through the air, for so I love to listen to thy tales.

And Maheshwara took her in his arms. And as they floated in space, she laid her head upon his breast, and played with his rosary of skulls, drinking his ocean-story[1] with the shell of her little ear.

And he said: There lived of old, in the northern quarter, two kings, who were neighbours, and hereditary enemies; and one was of the race of the Moon, and the other of the

[1] This epithet refers to his story-telling abundance. Shiwa is credited with the invention of all the stories in literature.

Sun; and one was king of the hill country, and the other, king of the plains. And the name of the one was Mitra, and that of the other, Chand.[1] And as fate would have it, King Mitra was a man of peace, and a lover of songs and pictures, and poetry, and ease. And he married a beautiful wife, whom he loved better than his own soul, and lived with her deliciously until at last she died, leaving him with a broken heart and nothing to console him except her recollection, as it were incarnate in a daughter who resembled her exactly in everything but years. But on the contrary, Chand was a lover of war. And he spent his whole life in fighting everlasting battles with all surrounding kings, never resting for a moment: and he reduced them, one by one, to submission and obedience, bending down their stubborn heads till their crowns were reflected all together in a ring in the

[1] Pronounce to rhyme with "stunned." (As these names will constantly recur, I have, for the benefit of the English reader, cut them down, retaining only their core. At length, they are names of the moon and sun, meaning respectively the *Friend* of the Lotuses, and the *Fierce* fire of the Sun.)

jewels of his toes as they humbly knelt before him, like a crown composed of crowns: for his military skill was like his stature, gigantic. And he married unwillingly, only for the sake of continuing the line of his descent; and having once obtained a son, he turned his back upon his wife, and went away, leaving her behind him, alone in his capital, and carrying away with him his son, whom he brought up in his camp, making him a warrior, and teaching him, both by continual precept and his own example, utter contempt for every peaceful occupation, and above all, for women. And so he went on, year by year, until at last, when his son was eighteen, and still unmarried,[1] for his father kept putting off his marriage, saying: What is the need of hurry? a necessary evil is better still deferred: King Chand was suddenly killed, in the field of battle. And he just had time to murmur to his son: Follow in my foot-

[1] Notwithstanding the system of very early marriage, cases of this kind are common in the old stories: as is necessary: for in fairy tales, unmarried heroines and heroes are *sine quibus non.*

steps: recollect my lessons: guard the kingdom: conquer the regions, and above all, beware of women: when Death took him, as it were, by the throat while he was speaking, and he set out instantly along the Great Road.

So, then, when his son, who was named after his father, had performed his father's obsequies according to the rites, he continued to live, exactly as his father had, before. And after a while, his ministers came to him one day, and said: Mahárâj, this is well, that the son should continue to run, like a wheel, in the rut his father made. But still there is a difference, between thee and thy father, which escapes thy observation. Then said Chand: What is that? And they said: He carried about with him everywhere, a son. And Chand said: Ha! so he did. Then said his ministers: It is high time that thy marriage also took place: and then in due time, the parallel between thy father and thyself will be exact, and thou wilt resemble him as closely as the moon resembles his own image in the water.

And then, Chand laughed, and he exclaimed: As if it were necessary to get married, in order to obtain a son! And his ministers said: It is absolutely necessary. For a son that is truly a son can be begotten only of a wife truly a wife, led by thee around the sacred fire.

Then said Chand: Ye are all mere fools. For if I choose, cannot I adopt a son, as many of my ancestors have done before me? And this is by far the better way. For who can tell beforehand what his own begotten son will be like? For many times a bad son has issued from the loins of a good father. But he who chooses a son, like one that chooses a horse, knows what he is doing: since he takes him for his qualities, visible and sure, out of all that he can find. And in this way, the object is attained, without having recourse to the expedient of a wife.

Then said his ministers: O King, if all men were to follow thy example, the world would come to an end. For even adopted

sons cannot be adopted, until they are begotten. And if thou wilt not marry, others must: or else thy plan is impossible and vain.

Then said Chand: Let the others all do exactly as they please, and so will I: for I at least will be an exception to this universal rule of marriage. For if women, as it seems, are indispensable, in this matter of procuring sons, I see no other use in them whatever. What is a woman but a mine of faults? For she cannot fight, and is destitute of valour; and she is absolutely nothing whatever but a man deprived of his manhood, a weakling, a coward, and a dwarf, and as it were, a misincarnation of impotence, accidentally formed by the Creator in a moment of fatigue, or forgetfulness, or hurry, or it may be, out of irony and sport: for there is absolutely nothing whatever worth doing, which a woman can do: nor can she do anything whatever, which a man cannot do far better than herself. And linked to a man, what is she, but a load, and as it were, a fetter or a chain to him, and like

a very heavy burden tied to the leg of one running in a race? And therefore, I see no use in her at all, but very much the contrary. For in addition to her incapacity, she is as it were endowed by the Creator with a multitude of positive defects: for she is everlastingly shedding tears, and scolding, and what is utterly intolerable, never stops talking about absolutely nothing, so that the mere presence of a woman is a curse. Moreover, she is as fickle and inconstant and capricious as the wind, and less to be trusted than a cobra; and over and over again, women have deceived and betrayed even their own husbands, both in love and war. But the very worst of all is, that they love a man less, in exact proportion to his worth, preferring almost anyone, no matter what he be, who flatters and courts and overvalues them, to even a hero who does not, abandoning, like flies, everything, to flock to that honey which alone attracts them, and demanding the sacrifice of everything noble to their craving appetite for frivolity and sweets. Therefore for my part

I will live, never having anything whatever to do with any one of them: nor shall any jackal of you all persuade me to put off the natural colour I was born with, and by plunging into the vat of matrimony, come out dyed all over an intolerable blue.[1]

And hearing him speak, his ministers looked at one another, laughing in their sleeves. And they said to one another, behind his back: How well does this young lion roar, repeating by rote, as if he were a parrot, exactly what the old one taught him! For what, forsooth! does he know of woman, who has hardly been allowed to see were it even so much as her shadow? Truly, he resembles a young black bee, kept in ignorance of flowers and their honey, and taught to call it poison, conceitedly lecturing older bees, his brothers, about what he does not understand. But we shall see, whether, in due time, we shall not have the laugh on our side. And in the meanwhile, always provided he is not

[1] This refers to a story in the *Panchatantra*, well known in Europe as the fable of the fox who had lost his tail.

killed like his father, beforehand, his error is, at any rate, an error on the better side. For many a young king-bee, in his position, would long ago have rushed into the opposite extreme, rifling every lotus within his reach, till he died of intoxication and exhaustion and excess. But as for him, lucky will that lotus be, that first succeeds in opening his eyes to what a lotus really is: for he will give her, not the dregs of his satiety, but real devotion springing from an uncontaminated well, pure and delicious, of which no one has ever been allowed to drink before. And in the meantime, we will wait, in expectation of the change, which is certain to arrive.

So they waited: but time went on, and Chand still continued as before, thinking only of battle, and observing the *brahmachari*[1] vow, just as if there were no such thing as a woman in the world.

Then said Párwatí softly to her lord: Sure I am, that the god of the flowery bow[2] would have punished him severely for his presump-

[1] *i. e.*, of virginity. [2] *i. e.*, the God of Love.

tion, had he only heard him so outrageously vituperating his sworn allies and darling weapons as thou sayest.

And Maheshwara said: O Daughter of the Snow, he was punished, sufficiently, as thou wilt learn in due time. For few indeed are the young men or women that the Bodiless god overlooks, seeing that of all of us, he is by far the most jealous in exacting homage to his divinity, as if he doubted it himself, and greedy of extorting from everyone acknowledgment, like a woman uncertain of the affection of her lover, insatiably craving to hear its avowal, over and over again, from his lips. And yet, perhaps the greatest punishment of all would have been, to leave him alone: since of all my creatures, those are most to be pitied, whom love utterly neglects, leaving them as it were in a night to which there never comes a dawn. And who knows this better than thyself, by reason of thy own extraordinary torture,[1] before I

[1] *v.* the *Kumára Sambhawa*, for a full account of Párwatí's wooing.

had to burn Love's body for his own presumption, with fire from my eye. But now, hush! and lie still, and listen to the remainder of the tale.

II

Now in the meantime, all this while King Mitra continued, living in his capital among the hills, just as if King Chand had never been born, with a soul that was divided, as it were, with exact precision, between his dead wife and his living daughter, who resembled one another like the two Twilights,[1] so closely, that he could not look at his daughter, without thinking of his wife, nor call his wife back to his recollection without bringing his daughter with her, like a shadow of herself. And between them his soul hovered, going backwards and forwards, till he was hardly able to discern, of the present and the past, which was the reality, and which only a dream. And so as he continued, one day there came to see him in his palace his

[1] Dusk and Dawn.

prime minister, Yogeshwara. Now this minister was well named, being very old and very crafty, and in spite of the King's inattention, he had borne the kingdom on his own shoulders all his life, preserving it intact. For his wisdom resembled his white head, and there was not a black hair in the one, nor a weak spot in the other: since both had reached the perfect state of being without a flaw.

So when he entered, he said slowly to the King: O Mahárâj, certainly thy kingdom hangs over the very brink or ruin. And then, the old King looked at him with a smile. And he said: O Yogeshwara, I know of nothing in the world that could utterly destroy this kingdom, except thy own death. For then, indeed, it would be not merely on the brink, but lost and already lying at the very bottom of the abyss. But as it is, I see thee there before me, in vigour and health. How, then, can any ruin be impending? And Yogeshwara said: O King, here is Chand, the son of Chand, the very image of his father, for he has all his father's warlike ability, with

youth and its energy superadded, about to fall upon thy kingdom like a thunderstorm. And during his father's lifetime, though my hair turned white, as if with terror, and my ear-root wrinkled, as if with anxiety, nevertheless I managed, somehow or other, by the aid of thy royal fortune and the Lord of Obstacles, to turn his attack always upon others, and keep him busy at a distance from our territory. But now, all other kings being subdued, this young Chand, burning to outdo his father, has determined to fall at last on thee, being as it were ravenous for still more earth,[1] in the form of these thy hills. And he has sent a message, saying: That unless King Mitra will instantly make submission and pay tribute, he will hear the tread of King Chand's armies coming up towards the hills[2] like the roar of the rains in the burst of their flood. Nor is there any hope that he can be resisted by force, for he and

[1] The special duty of a king, according to the old Hindoo sages, is to hunger and thirst after earth, like Ovid's Eresichthon.

[2] The monsoon which travels N. E.

his armies will sweep away ours, like a wind scattering a heap of leaves.

So when he had spoken, the old King looked at him again, smiling exactly as before. And he said: O Yogeshwara, certainly this cloud seems to threaten a devastating storm. And yet, I am ready to stake my whole kingdom, that thou hast already devised a means of averting the catastrophe: nay, of even turning it to our advantage, so that this Chand-cloud, instead of sweeping away all our crops in ruin, will on the contrary water all our fields for another harvest.

Then said Yogeshwara: Mahárâj, something indeed I have meditated. And yet, all search would have been vain, and all deliberation idle, had I not, by the special favour of the Elephant-faced deity, discovered a diplomatist far abler than myself. And the old King laughed; and he exclaimed: Ha! that is news indeed! O Yogeshwara, tell me quickly, whether this wonder of diplomacy is young. For the time must come, though long may it be coming, when, like every other man,

thou too wilt have to change thy birth for another: and then I shall require him to replace thee. And little did I dream, that my kingdom contained within it another such as thou art. Truly, I am curious to see him. Then said Yogeshwara: Say rather, her: and often hast thou seen her, for it is no other than thy own daughter.

And as the King started, Yogeshwara said again: O King, there are circumstances, in which sex makes all the difference between wisdom and folly: and cases, in which a woman, just because she is a woman, will make a more invincible negotiator than all the ministers, from Dhritaráshtra[1] down, that ever lived. And this is such a case, and all the more, because the woman is such a woman as thy daughter, whom I think that the Creator must have framed, with an eye to this very situation. And now, then, I will tell thee, that I foresaw this from the first, and I kept it as it were stored in reserve as a resource in the hour of exigency, to be, if the Lord

[1] One of the heroes in the Mahabhárata.

of Obstacles were only favourable, the triumph of my policy and its crown, and the coping-stone of my career. And with this very object it was, that long ago, as thou knowest, I obtained thy permission to cultivate thy daughter, and to train her, and to tutor her; and as I watched her growing, I said within myself: Some day, this sowing of thine, aided by my culture, will be fruitful, and it may be, she will prove an instrument of policy, to save the kingdom from destruction, when every other instrument has failed. And very apt indeed was my pupil, and yet there is another Master, who has done infinitely more for her, in this matter of diplomacy, than I. For I think that the very God of Love himself has befriended this kingdom, and conspired to assist it in its need, lending his aid to supplement my own insufficient efforts, and mixing in thy daughter's composition some bewildering ingredient, peculiar to herself.

And then, all at once, the King exclaimed: Ah! no, not so. O Yogeshwara, thou art mistaken, for he took it from her mother. Ah!

cunning god, well he knew, where to find the fascination he required. O her voice! and her eyes! and the smile upon her lips! and O alas! for the sweetness that is gone for ever! Aye! indeed, there breathed from every part of her something that I cannot name, some spell, some property, some fragrance, flung as it were from some intoxicating source within her soul, to drive me to despair.

And as the King stopped, sadly fixing his eyes upon the ground, Yogeshwara said again: Mahárâj, whether the Deity took it, as thou sayest, from the Queen her mother, or invented it afresh, I cannot tell: but certain it is, that the feminine delusion in thy daughter is the very masterpiece of a Deity skilled beyond all others in the production of the irresistible: and old as I am, and versed in all the varieties and ways of women, I never saw anything that resembled it before. And often, as I have watched her, innocently casting what thou hast called her fragrance about her in the air, with none to note it, and all unconscious of her own inexplicable charm,

like a great blue lonely lotus-flower growing on a silent mirror of black water in an undiscovered forest-pool, never even dreaming of looking at its own reflection in the water, towards which all the time it bends, as if to kiss it, absolutely blind to the loveliness that almost touches it, and issues from itself, depriving everyone that sees it of his reason, I have striven in wonder to discover, exactly in what the charm consisted, and in what part of her it lay: and yet I could not, so craftily has the Creator distributed it everywhere about her. And yet, musing over it alone, it has seemed to me to be a thing compounded, as it were, of contradiction. For as you listen to her, you are amazed by her intelligence, and when you look at her, you smile as it were against your will, and yet with an inclination to laugh, from pure delight, so strange and so surprising and somehow or other, absurdly delicious does it seem, for such sagacity to lodge, incongruously, in such a casket, so dainty, and so delicate, and so curiously and beautifully mocking as it were the

cruder mould of all her ordinary sisters, that it leaves you puzzled and perplexed and doubtful, whether to treat her as a woman or a child, or something altogether different from both. And there is a sort of exhilarating, and as it were, caressing sweetness, and a sound resembling liquid laughter, falling far away and yet lurking, somewhere or other, in the tone of her voice, as it gives utterance to aphorisms worthy of Brihaspati,[1] that flatters and intoxicates the ear, stealing through it straight into the soul, and lending to everything she says, even were it nonsense, a power of persuasion not its own. And as if this, coupled to her beauty, were not enough, there is something affectionate, and confiding, and as it were, an appealing submission that is mixed, I cannot tell how, with a kind of proud and half playful, half serious defiance, that flatters and delights and bribes and corrupts you in her behaviour, and would utterly disarm you, even if you were, what is absolutely impossible, her enemy; so that if once you looked

[1] The preceptor of the gods; as we should say, a Solon.

at her, you would be helpless, and wholly unable to be angry with her, no matter what she did; for she would laugh at your anger and beguile it, like a bewitching child endeavouring to play with incomparable grace the part of a woman, and challenging you to find fault with her on any ground whatever. And yet she has the cunning of her sex in so large a measure, that she seems to have monopolised it all. And now I am a booby, and all my experience is of less value than a straw, if there is even one young man in the eight quarters of the world capable of looking at her for an instant without losing all his senses at one blow; were he even the very incarnation of asceticism. But as to this young Chand, I have followed him from his childhood, by means of my spies, and know him; and very cheap do I hold his professions of misogyny and *brahmacharyam,* now that his father is away. For an old misogynist may be in earnest, and actually mean what he says, having been deceived and betrayed and disgusted, by reason of his experi-

ence of some women in particular, with all. But the man whose wisdom is taken at second-hand from another, and who is filled only with the conceit of a knowledge not drawn from his experience, finds it crumble to pieces as a rule at the very first touch of reality and life, like sand: since a single shock to any part of his imaginary fortress brings the whole to the ground with a run. For finding it untrustworthy in any one point, he distrusts it all, and is left utterly defenceless, at the mercy of his antagonist. And of all kinds of conceit, that of a youth, himself, as Chand is, formed as it were of amber, on purpose to attract the sex, like grass, who boasts himself proof against a woman's glamour, never even dreaming what it is or what it means, is the greatest, and the shortest, and the most easily annihilated, and the most easily abandoned, and forgotten and forgiven, both by women and the world. And thy daughter will bring him to his senses, and deprive him of his reason, in the same instant that he sees her: for then he will suddenly discover what

a woman means: since till now, she has been to him nothing but a word. And now, O King, I have told thee: and now all rests with thee alone. For thy daughter must in any case marry somebody: and where could be found for her a better husband than this very Chand, whose alliance would be the salvation of the state?

And when he ended, after a while, the King said, very slowly: Old friend, thy words resembled a sword, driven into my heart. And as I listened to thy voice, holding up before me, like a skilful painter, the picture of my daughter's charm, I saw in it, as in a mirror, another standing all the while beside her, looking at me all the while with the affection in her eyes that I shall never see again. And I flew back in an instant, carried on thy voice, to old sweet idle hours, when like thee I used to sit and watch and muse, striving to discover the essence and the secret of that very self-same charm. And I would give a hundred lives only to be young Chand, and have that charm employed on me, again. And if

he is able to resist it, I do not envy him, nor think the more of him on that account. But let us try, and see. For as to the wisdom and the policy of what thou hast proposed, there cannot be a doubt of it: and my daughter must alas! be married, as thou sayest, either to another, or to him. Only they say, that this young Chand is so declared an enemy of women, as never even to suffer any one of them so much as to approach him. And how, then, is the charm to work? For in magic of this kind, the spell will not act, unless the magician be in contact with his object. And how, then, shall we bring about the meeting of the charmer and the charmed?

Then said Yogeshwara: O King, I have a stratagem to meet that very difficulty, which, if my experience is not utterly at fault, is the real, and the only one before us. For could we only place them in proximity, I am ready to cut my own head off, if he can ever get away. And thy daughter will fall into the scheme, and understand it, almost before we begin to tell her, and require no instructions,

since this is a matter in which she is wiser than us all: and to go about to tell a young beauty how to lay her snares for her natural and proper prey would be to give lessons to the spider how to make his web. Moreover, I do not doubt that she will take part in the plot not merely with avidity, but something more. For she has heard, as who has not? of this young Chand, and nothing is so attractive to the curiosity of a woman as a young woman-hater: since every woman thinks, in her heart, that she could perhaps persuade him to count her an exception to his rule, and every woman in her heart partly agrees with him, since, if she could have chosen, she would have preferred to be a man. And women have been adorers, since the beginning, of exactly such young warriors of whom he is the type.

So, then, by Yogeshwara's advice, King Mitra sent an answer to the message of King Chand, saying: That King Mitra was ready to accede to all King Chand's demands, and pay him tribute in any such form as he might choose, if only King Chand would come up

in person, under the safe-conduct of King Mitra, to require it. For the matter would touch, in its adjustment, the honour of both families, and the hereditary differences could only be determined by personal arrangement on the spot.

And when Chand got his answer, he said to his ministers: See, now, everything is settled, though I would rather have settled it by arms. But as it is, now, by all means, I will go up, and give him the personal interview he asks. For I have never yet been among his hills, nor seen his capital: moreover, it is only fair to make concessions to pride willing to be humbled, and families careful of their honour.

And his ministers consulted together, and they said: Mahárâj, doubtless, the safe-conduct of King Mitra is unexceptionable, and above suspicion: for he is a man of his word. And yet, be on thy guard. For though King Mitra be incapable of deceit, his minister, Yogeshwara, has almost as much craft as the Creator. For though he could

not make a world, he could preserve it, once it was made, almost as well as its maker, so unfathomable is his policy and guile. Moreover, King Mitra has a daughter, who resembles his minister in being an incarnation of deception, only in a different form. For feminine beauty has befooled more men than were ever beguiled by any other form of fascination or illusion. Therefore beware! for we think it probable that a snare has been prepared for thee.

And Chand laughed, and exclaimed: I am obliged to ye all, for your wisdom and advice, and now I am warned. But the matter is very simple, being wholly an affair of force, and mine is by far the greater. Therefore there is no room at all for me to be beguiled, even by Yogeshwara. And as to the daughter, little do I fear her. For I have an armour of proof around my heart, so thick, that never an arrow from her quiver can so much as reach it, were it sharpened even by the very God of Love.

And then, the God, whose banner bears a

bull on it,[1] paused. And he said: O Snowy one, it chanced, that when Chand uttered this brag, it was the season of Spring, who, with his flowers and his buds, was all around him as he spoke. And as fate would have it, he was overheard by Love himself, who was hovering near him in the air; for he happened to be paying a visit to his friend.[2]

So when that god of the bee-strung bow heard him, he said to Madhu: O Madhu, who is this boaster, who claims, notwithstanding his extreme youth, to be proof against me and my weapons?[3] For thou hast been here longer than I, who have only just arrived.

And Madhu told him all about King Chand, and his antipathy to women.

And when Love heard it, he looked at Chand for a long time, with very great attention. And after a while, he said: O Madhu, it is

[1] *i. e.*, Maheshwara.

[2] *i. e.*, Spring. Káma and Madhu—Love and Spring—are sworn friends in Hindoo mythology: an obvious poetical allegory, like the *ver* and *Venus* of the old Romans.

[3] *i. e.*, women.

very singular to hear such overweening and presumptuous words, falling from the mouth of such a youth as this. For he is exactly the man who in my hands would be a deadly weapon against almost any member of that sex, which he fancies himself able to resist.

Then said Madhu: Perhaps it is not only fancy. For often have I laid snares for him, but always without success.

And Love laughed, with lips that curled in derision like his own bow. And he said: Dear Madhu, thou shouldst have come to me, for aid. Thou art but half thyself, without thy friend. And he looked at Chand, out of the long corner of his eye, that resembled a woman's. And he said: I have an affection for these arrogant youths, for it is my hobby and my delight to bring them to submission. And now I will teach him a lesson, in his own art of war, that he has still to learn, not to despise his enemy; and prove to him, by my own favourite method of ocular demonstration, that a woman and my deity are more than match for greater force than his. And

indeed, the conjunction[1] is altogether fortunate. For it so happens that I have by me, just ready for him, a new just-opened flower-intoxicant in the form of a young woman, whose exasperating eyebrows alone, unless I am much mistaken, will shoot, in spite of his glorious brag, a poisoned shaft into his heart, and sticking there, will sting it, with such intolerable pain, as will hardly be assuaged by a very storm of secret kisses, rained on the flame of his desire, or dropped on his fainting soul, one by one, with snow-flake touch, of pity and compassion, from her dainty and reluctant lips.

[1] An astrological term, which in modern Marathi, well known to the god, means a marriage.

A Diplomatic Interview

A Diplomatic Interview

I

And Maheshwara said: So then, on a day appointed, in the light half of the month of Chaitra,[1] King Chand and his retinue arrived at the capital of King Mitra, just as his ancestor the sun was rising over the hills on which it stood. And at the gates, Yogeshwara was waiting, barefooted, with an escort, to do him honour, and food and drink of every description, to refresh him. And he introduced himself by name and family, and said: O King, thy coming here is altogether fortunate. For see, the Lord of Day rises auspiciously on one side, as if to greet and welcome his descendant and rival on the other.

[1] A spring month, our April, devoted especially to marriages.

And now my old eyes are as it were dazzled, by two rising suns. And Chand said: I marvel, that my very great grandfather has not long ago died, of sheer fatigue, being obliged to climb up here every day to reach thee, as I have now. For thy capital is one that deserves to be inhabited by birds, rather than by men, and now the world lies, as it seems, beneath us in the clouds.

And when they were sufficiently refreshed, Yogeshwara handed over King Chand's attendants to his own, and said: Mahárâj, as for thee, I will myself be thy guide, for I have matters to say to thee in private, which, but for his age, our King would have been here to say to thee himself. And as he led the King away, Chand said to him: O Yogeshwara, though to-day I see thee for the very first time, fame has told me of thee much; and they say, that thou art a very mine of craft, with a soul as full of snares as is a hunter's net of holes. And now I am afraid of thee and of thy net.

And Yogeshwara laughed, and he said:

King, those who transact the business of states, even for a very little while, make enemies: how much more one who like me has borne the burden of this kingdom on his shoulders all his life! And it is these enemies of mine, who calumniate me, saying that I am crafty: for all my friends know that I am a very simple old man, who desires nothing more than to shift his burden on to other shoulders, and spend his life's evening in the practice of austerities: which, if only the Lord of Obstacles be favourable for just a very little longer, I shall presently do. But as for difficult affairs, the King my master leaves them in abler hands than mine, as in the present case, with which I have no more to do than just to be thy guide, as now I am, to the minister entrusted with its management. For our King's family and thine are hereditary enemies, and there are some matters to be settled of extreme delicacy, such as can only be adjusted by one, in whose especial care the honour of the family is placed. And there is but one, qualified to deal with this affair,

and it is, as thou hast doubtless anticipated, no other than the Guru[1] of the King: to whom, therefore, I am commissioned now to lead thee. And Yogeshwara paused, for a moment, and he said: Mahárájj, it is known to thee, who art versed in affairs, how important, in matters of this kind, is absolute secrecy. Now, eavesdroppers and busybodies abound, in this city. And therefore, it is given out, that thy reception will take place in the palace hall, where everything has been accordingly prepared, to throw everybody off the scent. But in the meantime, while all faces are turned in that direction, I am instructed to conduct thee, at the very instant of thy arrival, to a place least of all to be suspected as the scene of a diplomatic interview, and chosen with that object by the Guru himself, where he will personally settle everything beforehand, with thee alone. And in this way, no one will have had any time to penetrate the design, and the object is attained.

[1] There is no English equivalent for this term. A *guru* is the spiritual guide of the Hindoo family: a kind of father confessor.

And all the while he spoke, Yogeshwara led the King away, by winding paths that climbed about the hill, through a wood, till at last they reached a garden, whose air was loaded with the fragrance springing from the jostling spirits of innumerable flowers wandering about at random like *vyabhicháris*[1] looking for their lover, the mountain breeze, out of jealousy lest he should be sporting with their rivals. And they came in time to a terrace that was hanging as it were suspended on the very edge of a precipice, about which the early morning mists still floated, drifting here and there, rising up out of the valley, that stretched like a cloudy ocean, far away below. And on the very brink of that terrace there stood a little arbour, almost buried in a bushy clump of trees. And there came from that half-hidden arbour the sound of the humming of innumerable bees, that were hanging like clouds of another kind about the branches that concealed it, and clustering around them

[1] A woman who goes to meet her lover of her own accord.

like troops of black lovers struggling for the favour of the snowy blossoms which kept tumbling from their places to lie strewn about the ground like pallid corpses slain in the madness of excitement by those boisterous wooers, the bees. And the delicious scent of those blossom-laden mountain bushes was wafted towards them in yet other clouds that were invisible to the eye, seeming to say by their irresistible aroma: What though you cannot see us, we are not inferior to our visible rivals, the mists and the bees, in making this arbour a place without a peer. And Yogeshwara stood still, and looked towards it, and he said: Mahárájj, it is well chosen by the Guru. Who would ever dream of a diplomatic interview, in such a place as that?[1]

And he looked at the King, and laughed softly, rubbing his hands together. And he said: O King, the Guru, though he is very

[1] The deception of Yogeshwara was all the more likely to deceive the King, in that it was based on Hindoo traditional maxims. Manu says: [vii. 147] "*Let the King, for secret council, ascend to a mountain-top, or a lofty terrace, or repair to some lone wood, where there are not even any talking birds.*"

old, would have been here before us, had not thy activity in climbing taken us by surprise, and even anticipated the sun. But now I will go very quickly, and bring him; and in the meantime, the arbour is empty, and thou canst go in without fear of any intrusion, before his arrival. For I have taken special care to secure it this morning from all interruption, even of its owner.

And the King went forward, pushing his way among the trees. And as soon as he was lost among them, Yogeshwara went quickly round those trees, and entered them on tip-toe on the opposite side, and hid himself in an ambush carefully prepared beforehand for that very purpose by himself, from which he could see and hear everything that passed within, being himself unseen. And he said to himself: Now will I myself play the eaves-dropper, unknown to them both. For in matters of policy, nobody should be trusted, but one's own eyes and ears. And the best way to hear, is to overhear, and to see, is to peep. And so will I make a third party to

their interview. And though my own diplomatic interviews could be numbered by the score, certain it is, that I cannot recollect one, to which I looked forward with even half such anxiety as this.

II

But in the meanwhile, Chand went through the trees, towards the arbour. And he said to himself: Is it a snare? Or can King Mitra be intending to break his own safe-conduct? But in any case, I cannot exhibit any fear, or even suspicion. For what this old man says, is plausible, and may, possibly, be, after all, the truth: and then, I should be utterly ashamed.

And then he came to the arbour, and saw, in the wall towards him, a door. And as he looked carefully about, he saw, that the arbour stood exactly on the edge of the cliff, having only three walls, and being absolutely without a wall on the side that ran along the cliff, looking down into the gorge. And he paused, before he entered, saying to himself: Ha! From this arbour, as it seems, it would not be difficult even to fall, without intending

it. And now, a man might also very easily be thrown from it, down into that dizzy gulf below. And therefore, it becomes me to be very wary, and on my guard.

And then, he went up, and entered, cautiously, the door. And no sooner had he set his foot upon the marble floor within, than he started, and stood still, saying to himself: Ha! there is a woman in the arbour. And now, I see, that it is exactly as I thought, a snare, though not of the kind that I anticipated. And as my ministers said, this Yogeshwara has led me straight into a trap, with a woman for a bait. For as he looked, he saw, at the far end of the arbour, what seemed to be a woman, kneeling on the floor, with her back towards him, and bending over a great basket that resembled an enormous yellow gourd, filled with flowers to the brim. And the whole floor was strewn all over with flowers of every kind and colour, lying everywhere in heaps.

And at the very moment that his foot on entering touched the floor, as if roused by the

sound of its tread, she turned her head as she kneeled, and looked round, and saw him. And instantly she sprang like a flash of lightning to her feet, with a shrill cry. And she bounded like a deer to the precipice, and stood, facing him, balanced on its extreme verge, with both hands full of flowers, and both eyes opened wide, like circles, filled to the very brim with blue dismay, and her two brows lifted to her hair with utter amazement, and terror as it were written on every line of her body, that quivered all over as if on the very eve of another bound. And she looked exactly like a wild mountain antelope, suddenly taken by surprise, cut off from its retreat, and just in the very act of escaping its pursuer, by leaping straight into the gulf below, and taking, as it were, one last look of terrified despair at the cause of its destruction, just before she disappeared.

So as she stood, absolutely still, like a virgin incarnation of outraged seclusion, the King's suspicions vanished, at the very sight of her, and his heart reproached him for her coming

death. And he said to himself: I was wrong: for it is beyond all doubt that I have frightened her, almost to the point of self-destruction: as what are women, after all, but cowards to the core? And if I stay another moment, it seems certain that she will fall, even if she does not leap in terror, into that awful gulf, on whose very verge it makes me dizzy even to see her standing, how, I cannot think. Therefore I will go away at once, without delay. And as he so determined, he cast upon her a single glance of contempt mingled with disdain, just before turning to go away.

And in that brief moment of hesitation, he gave the God of Love his opportunity, and was lost beyond recall. For as he looked carelessly towards her, all at once, all his contempt and disdain suddenly disappeared, giving place to curiosity, that gradually changed into amazement, and then wonder, so that instead of turning, he stood himself absolutely still, as if to imitate her, lost in his own eyes, and resembling a picture painted on a wall. And all at once, a doubt suddenly rose into

his heart, so that he said to himself silently: Is it a woman after all? For as he gazed at her, her figure stood out, sharp and clear, against the background of the sky, and the empty space all round her and below her, so that she seemed to hang in air, poised somehow on the border of her garments that concealed her feet on the very edge of that dizzy steep. And she was clothed in one long soft robe of dark red silk, out of whose mass her two bare slender arms that held in their clenched hands her flowers stood like incomparable curves of alabaster, round, and miraculously still, and edged as it were with delicate distinctness as if by a sudden stroke of the Creator's chisel against the void behind them. And all about the graceful upper portion of her body and her head was clinging, like a cloud that had crept up to embrace her out of the misty sea below and settled affectionately in soft and loving folds about her, a veil, that was woven as it seemed out of golden films of the gauze of the setting sun, fastened to her head by what seemed to

be an inverted silver moon, and through it he could just discern against the slender slope of her shoulder the swelling outline of her shy right breast, shrinking beneath it as if in utter shame at the outrageous immodesty of its sister on the left, which owing to her attitude was thrown out defiantly towards him, as if to invite his admiration, and saying to him: Find fault with my pure and perfect maiden circle if you can.

And then, that very thing happened, which had been predicted by the God of Love. For all at once, the tall twin semicircles of her curving inky brow, on which astonishment sat motionless, as if unwilling to go away, struck him also with extreme surprise, so that like a mirror of herself he gazed at it, with his own brow raised in imitation unaware, saying to himself: Why, it exactly resembles a bent bow, drawn to the very breaking point, as if to discharge a shaft. And at that very moment, her blue eyes struck him to the heart. For there suddenly began to pour into his soul, from underneath that strange intoxicat-

ing bow, a flood of deep blue, and he utterly forgot, as he looked straight into it, what he was about, or where he was.

And at that exact moment, the Agitator of the Soul,[1] who, unseen himself, was watching him intently, poised in the abyss, a little way from the arbour's edge, became himself violently agitated. And he murmured softly, clasping his two hands together, with entreaty and emotion: O Wayu,[2] help me now, by some trick of thy art. For yonder my victim stands, balanced, exactly like herself, on the very brink of the precipice of passion, and a single touch will plunge him, headlong, into its boiling whirl.

And the Wind heard his prayer, and came suddenly to his assistance. For all at once, there leaped up out of that valley of mist a gust, that caught the garments of that slender beauty standing still upon its edge, and tossed them into folds that fluttered round her lovely limbs, betraying all their undulating lines and

[1] *Manmatha:* the God of Love, the *Churner* of the Soul.
[2] The God of the Wind.

hills and hollows, making her round breasts rounder, and adding curve to her curving hips, tearing away the curtain from her beauty, and carving as it were her statue out of the soft substance of her clinging red silk robe. And it lifted, just a very little, that provoking curtain's lower edge, and showed him, for only a single instant, her two tiny feet, with their ankles, standing timidly together, and then dropped it again, as if ashamed. And Kámadewa murmured in delight: Well done, O admirable Wayu; again, once more. And once again the Wind obeyed him. For it caught up, suddenly, a wisp of cloud, floating past as if on purpose to oblige the God of Love, and tore it and sent it, driving and curling, a little way above her pretty head, between her and the sun. And the shadows of that broken cloud suddenly ran over her, and showed her for an instant to the King, now bathed in the kisses of the young sun's colour, now darkened, as if by jealousy, by the shadows of the cloud, that envied as it were the kisses of the sun.

And all at once, as the King gazed at her like one in a trance, she spoke. And she said, in a low voice, that trembled as if at its own sound: Sir, this arbour is mine, and sacred, and forbidden to all but me alone. And doubtless, thou hast intruded by accident, rather than design.

And Chand looked at her as she spoke, like a man stunned by a blow: all unaware that she, and the Wind, and Love, and Spring were all in conspiracy against him. And he hardly understood the meaning of her words. But he said to himself, as he looked at her in confusion: Was there ever before heard in the world a sound like that low delicious frightened voice?

And for a single instant, he looked straight into her eyes. And he wavered, and hesitated, knowing neither what to say, nor what to do. And all at once, he bowed to her, and turned round, and went away without a word, the way he came.

And seeing him go, Yogeshwara in his ambush bit his lip with annoyance. And he said

to himself: Why, what on earth is she about? For she has actually driven him away, almost before he had arrived.

But the son of Brahma[1] looked after him, as he went, with exultation, and a mocking smile. And he said: Excellent Wayu, thy delicious touches have finished him. And now, my business is done, and I need stay no longer. Let him go, if he will: he will soon be back, of his own accord. Now, there is nothing in the three worlds strong enough to keep him away.

And the Daughter of the Mountain said softly to her lord: See, how Kandarpa[2] is always just the same, merciless, and jeering at his unhappy victims, and adding insult to his injury, and fearing no retaliation, secure of impunity. For well he knows, that his body cannot again be reduced to ashes, seeing that men and women have only two eyes each.[3]

[1] *i. e.*, Love. [2] *i. e.*, Love.

[3] *i. e.*, they all lack Maheshwara's third eye, which consumed Love's body with a fiery glance, when the audacious little deity dared to inspire the Great God himself with passion for Párwatí as she stood before him.

III

But in the meanwhile, no sooner had the King turned his back upon the terrace with its arbour, than all at once, his feet stopped, as it were, of their own accord, as if in their unwillingness to go away, they had suddenly become rooted in the ground. And so he remained standing, with his eyes fixed upon the ground before him, and a soul, out of which everything had utterly disappeared, except the picture of what he had left behind him, standing on the edge of the cliff. And he had totally forgotten Yogeshwara, and the King's Guru, and everything else, so intense was his preoccupation and his endeavour to reconstruct that picture in his mind. And as he stood striving to recall it, all unawares he smiled, so great was his pleasure in its recollection.[1] And he murmured to himself:

[1] The English reader should bear in mind, that, in Sanskrit, *recollection* and *love* are often, as here, denoted by the same word.

Strange! that I cannot, I know not why, recollect anything about her, with exact accuracy, except those delicious, and, somehow or other, bewildering, and as it were, provoking brows of hers, with their two surprising arches. For I had no time to examine the rest of her attentively; and moreover, the blue colour of her eyes, in which I seemed to flounder, confused my soul, and stood before it like a mist, in which I could see absolutely nothing else. And yet, if I recollect correctly, the double curve of her brow was as it were repeated, in her lips, which resembled a miniature reproduction of her brow, only red instead of black, and in her soft round bosom, and even all about her, so that she seemed to be a thing composed entirely of twin curves, beginning from her brow.

And so as he stood, all at once there arose in his soul an intense desire to look at her again, mixed with extreme regret, and sorrow, for his own abrupt departure. And he was enraged with himself, feeling like one that had

missed an opportunity that could never again recur, and he stood with a soul sick with longing to return, and disinclination to go away, mixed with shame at the thought of returning. And he muttered to himself: Alas! where was the necessity of going away with such extraordinary precipitation? Why did I not wait a little while? Surely I was a fool. And what is to be done now? And I wonder what she is doing. Who knows, whether she is still there, having perhaps gone away herself, somehow or other, as soon as I had gone?

So as he stood, in perplexity, debating with himself, all at once, his face lit up, as it were, with a smile of satisfaction. And he exclaimed in delight: Ha! I have suddenly discovered a pretext, under cover of which I can return, and thus create another opportunity of seeing her, if only she is still there.

And instantly he turned round, and went back towards the arbour as it were with joyous step, and a soul in exultation at the

anticipation of seeing her again, mixed with intense anxiety, lest, when he entered, the arbour should be empty, and she have gone away.

IV

And when he entered the arbour once more, and saw her again, this time, at the very sight of her, his heart trembled with delight, saying to itself, as if with relief: Ah! she is still there. And she was standing almost exactly in the attitude in which she stood before, save only, that she was not quite so close to the brink of the abyss. But she made a step towards it, as he entered, turning, and taking, as it were, her stand beside it, as much as to say: Here is my friend, and my defender, and my refuge. And all the surprise had vanished from her face: and instead of it, the eyes, with which she looked at him in doubt, were full of dark suspicion and distrust, mixed with apprehension. And they watched him, with close attention, as if she expected that, like a panther, he might make a sudden spring upon her, before she could escape. And she

seemed to say to him, with silent alarm and indignation: What! has he actually returned? Ha! it is as I feared. And now, my only refuge lies at the very bottom of the gorge.

And then, as if afraid lest she should put her threat into execution, out of terror, before he could prevent her, the King said hastily: O mountain maiden, do not be afraid, to see me return: for I have done so, only because I was ashamed, first, for having broken in upon thy privacy, and then again, still more, for having left thee so abruptly, without explaining or excusing my intrusion. And if I am guilty, I am not without excuse: nor myself the one to blame: since I was brought here by the minister, Yogeshwara, who told me to expect in this arbour the arrival of the Guru of the King. And being an utter stranger, I know not, if I go away alone, whither to turn my steps. But in any case, I do adjure thee, to dismiss thy apprehension: since thou hast absolutely no occasion at all for alarm.

And while he spoke, she stood, listening,

with suspicion, to his apology: and when he finished, all at once, she turned upon him like a fury, and exclaimed, stamping her little foot upon the ground: And how dared Yogeshwara bring thee to my arbour? Did I not refuse, when he begged me to lend it him, and yet, has he had the audacity to borrow it, against my will? and use it, as an inn, for passing strangers? And as the King stood, aghast, amazed at the sudden storm of indignation that fell upon him, like a traveller overtaken by a thundercloud, yet all the while wondering at the beauty of the lightning threatening to strike him, all at once, recollection suddenly brought into his mind, what Yogeshwara had said to him, just before he went away. And he murmured to himself: Apparently the owner of this arbour, notwithstanding Yogeshwara's diligence, is before me after all, and certainly this arbour is, as it seems, the very last place to which I should have come. And as he thought, all at once she said to him, with irritation: And who then art thou, whom he has placed here, as if

on purpose to disturb me, and terrify me and annoy me?

And as the King looked at her, he said to himself: Now I shall pay for Yogeshwara's impertinence. And I feel like a culprit before her, and yet, somehow or other, her anger is delightful, like that of a child whose toy is broken, about to fly into a passion with anyone it sees. And he said: O maiden, be not angry with the innocent. For I am only Chand the son of Chand, arrived here this very morning on a visit of importance to thy King.

And as he spoke, she started with surprise: and then all at once, as he watched her, all her anger suddenly disappeared. And a smile, like that of one who recollects, crept over her face: and she dropped all her flowers upon the floor, and began to clap her hands. And she exclaimed: Ha! now I remember, and who else could it be? And I wonder that I did not think of it before: since they say, King Chand is a giant, and thy size is, as it were, thy guarantee, and the proof of thy

words. And now, then, I will solve thy problem, in the matter of this arbour, by instantly going away myself, and leaving it to thee: to await by thyself the arrival of the Guru: for as to Yogeshwara, he shall learn another time, the danger of employing my arbour as an inn.

And instantly, she drew her veil around her face,[1] and came very quickly towards him, to pass by him, and escape by the door. But Chand put out his hand, as though to stop her, exclaiming: O daughter of King Mitra, for I cannot doubt that thou art she, I should be altogether inexcusable, if I came here only to deprive thee, and as it were, expel thee from thy arbour by my coming. See now, I will myself depart the very moment that the Guru arrives: and in the meantime, wilt thou not dismiss thy alarm and indignation,

[1] Nothing in India is so delightful as the grace with which the women, even the oldest and the ugliest, handle that part of their garment that serves them for a veil. It is an everlasting beauty to see them, as they walk along the street, quietly drawing it around them: a thing lost among us altogether, like its motive.

and suffer me to remain with thee, till he appears?

And as he spoke, Yogeshwara in his ambush exclaimed in delight: Ha! I did her wrong, and she is very clever. For now she has brought him to the point of begging for permission to remain, never dreaming, that that is exactly what she wishes him to do herself. And I thought that she had driven him away: but she, like a skilful angler, knew, that the hook was already in the jaws of her royal fish.

V

So as the King spoke, with imploring eyes, and entreaty in his voice, she turned suddenly towards him, and began as it were to examine him, with curiosity and amazement. And after a while she said, as if with incredulity: Have my own ears turned traitors, and is it now, that they are playing me false, or was it then, when, as I thought, I heard thee name thyself King Chand the son of Chand? And Chand said: Nay, but I am actually he. And she laughed scornfully, and exclaimed: Art thou absolutely sure, that thou hast not mistaken thy identity? Can it be, that thou art really Chand? For I have heard, that of all companions in the world, women are those from whom he most desires to escape.

And she looked at him awhile, with eyes, of which he could not tell, whether that which filled their blue was disbelief or derision or

amusement; and all at once, she turned away, and went back to her basket, and began once more to busy herself about its flowers, kneeling down beside it. And after a while, she turned her head towards him, and said, shooting at him a glance out of the very corner of her eye: King Chand has my permission, if he chooses, to remain, till the Guru arrives: and in the meanwhile, I crave his permission to return to my work among my flowers, in which his uninvited entrance interrupted me: since such a thing as I am is not fit for such a hero as is he: nor can it be supposed that conversation such as mine could possibly amuse him. And yet, would the King deign to be advised by such a thing as me, he would go instantly away, without losing any time: for there is danger in remaining.

And Chand said: Where, and of what nature is the danger? And as he spoke, she turned round, and bent her great blue eyes upon him, with her two lips closed, as though determined not to smile, almost into a ball, so that they exactly resembled a ripe *bimba*

fruit. And she seemed as it were to say to him: Dost thou not recognise, who is the danger? And after a while, she turned away, saying: The danger is, that King Chand may utterly wreck his reputation for misogyny, by betraying an inclination for the society of women. For I think that his friends in the plains would be very much astonished, if they knew that he had actually gone so far as to return of his own accord to an arbour, out of which the unsuspected and abominable presence of one of that insignificant and useless sex had originally driven him.

And then she sat in silence, stealing at him every now and then glances from eyes he could not see, that resembled soft flashes of lightning in the form of blue and silent laughter, from under the long lashes which as he watched her he could see standing out from her round soft cheek like the roof of a house. And though she never laughed, he knew that she was laughing at him, by that very cheek, from which he could not take his eyes, resembling as it did a very incarna-

tion of round, soft, delicious, unpunishable impertinence, that attracted him with so irresistible a longing for its owner that he could hardly breathe. And yet he was filled with shame, and confusion, and rage against himself, and also against her; and all the while he felt, that his anger against her was as it were impotent and helpless, for his soul began as it were to turn traitor to him, going over in spite of himself to her side. And so he stood, gazing at her in wrath that was mixed with a smile of delight, utterly unable either to say or to do anything at all. And he strove to be offended with her, in vain, in spite of the shame and exasperation that she was pouring into his heart. And so as he stood, like a picture of wounded pride and helpless irresolution, all at once, she looked round, and as it were caught him unawares, standing at her mercy, abashed and ashamed, the very target of her mocking eyes. And utterly unable to endure it any longer, he suddenly turned and ran out of the arbour, as if he were escaping from a foe.

VI

And then, strange! hardly had he gone a few steps from the terrace, when again his feet stopped, as if utterly refusing to carry him away. And he stood, burning with shame, and anger, and yet unable to move. And he thought no longer, as at first, of her beauty, but simply of herself: and he was absolutely miserable, feeling that somehow or other she had mastered him; and his soul was filled to the very brim with nothing but her, and as it were kept on repeating obstinately, she, she, she, as if her personality had filled it to the exclusion of his own. Alas! by reason of his youth and inexperience he was all unaware, that the poison of Love was in his heart, and beginning to work. And she danced as it were before his eyes, and whirled all round him, and sat in his soul, and seized upon it and its faculties and senses, and it was as

though the world had vanished, leaving in its place nothing but a void, composed of a blue that was the very substance of herself. And so he stood, still, like one torn by strong chains in opposite directions, determined to go away, and yet never moving, and ashamed to go back, and yet drawn by an irresistible spell, that whispered as it were in his ear: Return: return. And so he stood a long while, as utterly unconscious of everything around him, as if he had become a tree, fanned by the wind.

And at last, he turned, and went back, very slowly, with sad and heavy feet, that moved, as if they were carrying a guilty criminal to his own execution. And when he reached the arbour door, again he stopped, and stood irresolutely near it, looking out over the valley, like one paralysed by his own indecision. And then at length, unable to endure the separation from her any longer, he said to himself with a sigh: Now everything is quiet: and doubtless, she has utterly forgotten all about me, thinking me gone, not again to return. And

now no doubt she will be working with her flowers, just as she was at first, and with her back towards me. Therefore, if I stoop down, very carefully, making no noise, I shall be able to watch her, unobserved. And he stooped, stealthily, and peeped round the edge of the door.

And lo! when he looked, she also was standing, stooping, almost exactly like himself, on the other side, close to the door, and leaning forward eagerly, with a great bunch of flowers in one hand, and the other stretched, like a creeper, bowing in the wind of excitement, a little way before her, watching, as if with eager desire, to see him return. And when, all at once, their eyes met, she stood a little while looking at him exactly like a child in the extremity of delight. And all at once, she began to laugh, with low, long, joyous and unrestrainable laughter, that went on and on, sounding in his ears like the murmur of a waterfall, and seeming as though it would never stop. And the King, reduced as he was to the very lowest depth of utter shame,

and blushing, till the very hair seemed to stand up upon his head, found as it were a refuge in his very desperation. And he said to himself: I care not, for now I am at the very bottom of the abyss of shame: and let her laugh, if she will, at me, or anything in the three worlds: so only that I listen to her, and am here, to look at her again.

And at last, she said, with her laughter still hanging as it were in the music of her voice: O King Chand, if thou art really he, come in, since as it appears, thou absolutely must, for I have a question to put to thee. And the King entered, like a culprit, and stood looking at her like one ready to submit to any punishment she chose. And she came towards him and stood, with her two little bare feet exactly together, side by side, and her two hands clasped behind her back, and her head thrown right back upon her shoulders to look up at him, so that her two small breasts jutted out like round bosses on the edge of the delicious terrace of her throat. And she

said: Mahárâj, wilt thou, to whom all women are equally contemptible, only tell me, for I am curious to know, why thou art so utterly unable to go away from this arbour of mine? Is it these flowers that attract thee? For here there is absolutely nothing other than these flowers, and myself.

And as she spoke, her small mouth, that resembled the incarnate fragrance and colour of a flower, with its two intoxicating lips parted in the curl of a smile, just over the leaf-like point of her small soft chin, bewildered him so, that he could hardly listen to the meaning of her words. And he stammered, and hesitated, and said: I came, because I had nowhere else to go. Then she said: And why, then, didst thou go away at all? And suddenly he said: I went, in order to escape, alas! from thee. And she said, shaking her head slowly from side to side: Nay, not from me, but it may be, from thyself. Art thou sure that it is not thy own self, from which thou art vainly endeavouring to escape? Dost thou know thyself so well,

as to be certain what it is, that thou art shunning or desiring? Stand, now, there a little while, and examine for thyself thy condition, while I finish my work.

VII

And as she spoke, once more she went back to her flowers. And she dragged her great basket, with difficulty, to the very edge of the cliff, and knelt, sitting on her own feet, beside it. And taking out its flowers, one by one, she began rapidly and skilfully to weave them in a garland, crooning to herself all the while a kind of song, in a voice so low as to be all but inaudible. And she paid absolutely no attention to the King at all, wholly absorbed as it seemed in her work, and ignoring his presence altogether. And every now and then, she took a flower, and held it up before her, speaking as it were to it, before she wove it in among its fellows; and now and then she looked, with attention, at a flower, and as if condemning it, threw it away into the valley. So she continued, weaving, and muttering as it were a spell. And all the while

she swayed to and fro, a very little, as if keeping time to her own unintelligible song.

And so as she sat and wove, the King stood watching her, leaning against the door-post, with his arms folded, absolutely still. And he resembled a rock, against which the sea of her beauty came beating, wave after wave, as if to shake it from its base. And his soul went travelling, by the means of his eye, slowly and carefully about her, like a painter. And like a bee, it hovered about the flower of her moving lips, and flew circling all about the slowly moving curve of her bosom, and wandered in and out about her slender waist, lost, as she sat kneeling, in the folds of her heavy limbs, and then rose and repeated its journey, ending where it first began, and going round and round her, as if unable to go away. And as he gazed, he became as it were himself a sea, and began as it were to surge in agitation, under the soft mysterious attraction of that moonlike mass of grace and symmetry and curve and colour, floating as it seemed before him in the air, on the edge of that cliff. And

all the while, there was silence in the arbour, broken only by the low sound of the singing of the King's daughter. And in that silence, the humming of the bees outside came, every now and then, drifting in upon the breeze, that carried also the scent of the blossoms of the trees, and floated about the King, charming at once by a double spell, like billows of the essence of intoxication rolling in on his already intoxicated soul. And he heard the wind below in the valley sweep sighing among its trees, and now and then, the note of the wild pigeon calling to his wife. So he stood, wrapped in a dream, lifted as it were on that cloud-loved terrace above the world, and bathing in the nectar-poison of the nervous apprehension of pure passion that was absolutely lost, in the ecstasy of self-annihilation, in its object, the maiden form before him, singing and swaying as she wove.

And then, at last, she finished her work, and stopped. And she stood up, and took the garland she had made, and laid it carefully aside, in a corner. And then she turned

towards him, and pointed with her finger to the marble seat that ran like a long bench all along the arbour wall. And the King instantly went and took his seat, as if obeying her commands, upon it, while she returned and remained, half sitting, half kneeling, beside her basket with fragments of flowers all around her, and her two hands joined together on her lap.

VIII

And at that moment, there came a great eagle, that passed in the air close beside them, and flew away over the valley. And seeing him, she said: O King Chand, would thy friends below believe him, were he to fly down and tell them, he had seen thee sitting on a mountain cliff, conversing with a woman! Then said Chand with a sigh: Art thou indeed a woman, and not rather some mountain witch that has destroyed me by a spell? For it is but a moment since first I entered this enchanted arbour, and already I am changed, into something other than I was: and short as it has been, yet that moment has contained within it as it were the power of years of alteration. Then she said: If this arbour of mine has wrought a change in thee, to thy dissatisfaction, surely the fault was all

thy own, for coming in, and thrusting thyself upon me, as it were, not once alone, but many times, not by my invitation, but of thy own accord. Blame, therefore, thyself alone, if thou hast suffered, by reason of thy intrusion, a change for the worse. And the King said hastily: I said not that the change was for the worse, but only, that I had undergone a change. Then she said: But if, then, thy change is for the better, of what art thou complaining? Surely thou art in that case a gainer, by me and by my arbour. And he said: Nay, neither did I say that the change was for the better. And she laughed, and exclaimed: What! canst thou not even tell, whether this extraordinary change that has befallen thee is good or bad? Dost thou, then, not even know, which to prefer, thy former condition, or thy present? And he said: No. Then she said: Of what nature, then, is this inexplicable change, that leaves thee neither better, nor worse, nor even yet the same, but something indeterminate, of which thou canst give no account at all?

And the King remained silent, with his eyes fixed upon her face.

So then, after a while, she said softly: Come now, shall I come to thy assistance, and like a physician, probe for thee thy soul, and show thee, what thou canst not unriddle for thyself? Art thou not angry with thyself, and only for this reason, that thou art beginning to doubt, whether, after all, a woman is exactly only what thou hast hitherto determined to consider her? Say, is it not so? And thy confidence in thyself wavers, and thy soul is endeavouring to make, if possible, someone else, rather than thyself, culpable for the wound given to thy vanity? And the King exclaimed, as if stung by her words: Did I not say, thou wert a witch? Then she said: What need is here of any witchcraft? Art thou not, by thine own avowal, Chand, and who is there that has not heard alike of Chand's delight in war, and his antipathy to my sex? And she paused a moment, and she said: Come now; since fortune and thy own insistence have cast thee for a moment in my

way, and this Guru seems long in making his appearance, shall I in the interval do battle against thee, for myself and for my sisters? Thou art fond of battles: art thou ready to try thy fortune in this field?

And the King said in confusion: Nay, for the combatants in this case are unevenly equipped.

Then she laughed ironically, and exclaimed: What! Chand! and afraid of a combat with a woman! Shall I compare thee, then, to a general who has long ago taken up a position of which he boasts loudly as impregnable, yet dare not expose it to the test? And all at once she leaned towards him, and said, with a smile, in a tone of irresistible sweetness: Come, bring thy charges against me, one by one, and I will do what I can, in my weakness,[1] to refuse and repel them.

And as she spoke, Yogeshwara said to himself, within his ambush: Ha! now, let us see what he will say. And well did he object,

[1] There is a play on the word, which means also a woman.

that the combat was uneven, and its result, a foregone conclusion. For this crafty little daughter of a King knows just as well as he does, that she is herself the formidable argument, against which he has not only no weapons of attack, but absolutely no defence at all. And even before the battle has begun, she has annihilated all his force beforehand, by that bewildering glance from those blue irrefutable eyes, which stealing into his heart, have bribed and corrupted it, making it her own ally, and a traitor to himself.

IX

So, then, as she leaned towards him, with her head a little on one side, and her neck a little curved, and her eyes a little closed, and her lips a little parted in a caressing smile, the appeal of her soft entreating beauty struck the King so hard, that in his agitation, his tongue refused to speak. And just as if it had heard what Yogeshwara had said, his heart, drawn towards her through his eyes, deserted him, and going over to the enemy, nestled like a fugitive bird in the little hollow between the twin wave of her breast, saying as it were: Here will I dwell, close to her own, rocked to sleep on the rise and fall of this gentle sea. And he looked at her in silence, overcome with his own emotion, and at last he said with difficulty: Did I not say that I was changed? For but a little while

ago, before I entered this magic arbour, my mind was made completely up, with reference to thy sex, and I could have told thee I know not how many unanswerable reasons for condemning it: but now my soul is in confusion, and as I look at thee, I cannot bring against it any arguments at all. Aye! who could bring a charge of any kind against such a thing as thee?

And as he sighed, she said, with gaiety: Ha! does the enemy surrender, before even so much as attempting an attack? And what can have been the strength of a fortress, which its garrison abandons at the very sign of danger?

But the King, for answer, leaned his chin upon his hand, that rested on his knee, and gazed at her in silence, for so long, that the smile died away upon her lips, and she dropped her eyes upon the ground. And all at once he said: As I look at thee, my weapons of arguments seem as it were to bend and become blunted, and even to crumble to pieces in my hand: and I resemble one in a dream,

fighting in vain with a phantom sword, that turns to water or disappears whenever he attempts to strike a blow. For I used to think, that women were weak, and worthless in the day of battle, and so it is: and yet, looking at thee, weak as thou art, for I could crush thee in a moment, I would not have thee other than just the thing thou art, and thy very weakness seems, I know not how, to be a merit and a virtue in thee, and stronger than my strength; and in thy case, the very notion of a battle seems utterly abominable, and ludicrous, and out of place. And again, I used to think that a woman was a burden, and as I look at thee, I think that thou art a burden I would willingly carry, for as long as my strength would endure. And women's voices seemed to me made only for chattering and scolding, but thine is a music, strange, and soft, and unimaginably beautiful, that plays upon my heart, and gladly would I listen to it for ever, never so much as noting the passage of any time. And but yesterday I would have told thee, a woman was a traitor, but

to-day, looking at thy soul in the colour of thine eyes, I doubt not women, but myself. For they seem to me like two great black tanks, filled with unearthly liquid drawn from some deep Pátála well, where ocean mixes with the azure of the skies. And but an hour ago, I would have told thee, a woman was an ugly little thing, a deformity of man, in every point inferior to him: but as I look at thee, remorse comes over me, and horror, as I recollect and shudder at my crime, and I see that I resemble one blaspheming a divinity that ought rather to be worshipped and adored. For I am but a clod, and a coarse and rough and rude misshapen lump, compared with thee, and every morsel of thy fairy figure, from thy masses of dark hair to the sole of thy little foot, fills me with agitation and feeling that I cannot utter, and fierce desire as it were to devour thee, and thirst to drink of thy unutterable loveliness, that increases as I watch thee till I am likely to die of its intolerable sting. For I am burning as if with fire, and I know not what to do. And but an hour

ago, I thought my soul a strong tower, but as I look at thee, struck by a stroke of lightning in the form of thy little figure, it has all tumbled to pieces, and lies in black miserable ruin at thy feet.

X

And the King's voice trembled a little, as he spoke: and when he ended, she remained silent a little while, while the colour came and went upon her cheek. And at last, she laughed a little laugh, and she looked, not at him, but away into the valley, as she said: Nay, but this is a thing altogether incredible and strange. For King Chand, instead of attacking women, has suddenly become, on the contrary, their partisan. And yet I think, that his partisanship is greatly to be distrusted, even more than his old uncompromising enmity. For just as formerly he utterly despised and denounced all women without exception, never having had anything to do with even one: so now he suddenly becomes their champion, on the evidence of only a single instance, seen only for a single instant.

And so his new opinions seem even more suspicious, and will probably be still more rapidly evanescent, than his old.

And Chand said hastily: I swear to thee, that my mind is made up on this matter for ever, never again to waver, even for an instant. Thou art——But she interrupted him, holding up at him her forefinger, with a smile. And she exclaimed: O King, is it good policy, in matters of war, for a warrior to stake his life on so momentary a glimpse of his enemy? Stay, was that a footstep that I heard? And she listened for a moment, bending round in an attitude that almost broke the King's heart as he watched her, exclaiming within himself: O that the King's Guru were only at the bottom of the sea!

And hearing absolutely nothing, but the sighing of the wind, after a while, she turned once more towards the King, and she said, playfully: Must I, then, remind thee, that all this while, thou art merely an Intruder, present only by my sufferance and condescension, and that though it has come about,

I know not how, that thou art actually sitting here talking to me, in an arbour where no other has ever come but me, yet, that should the Intruder become forgetful of his true position, he will be immediately expelled?

And hearing her speak, Yogeshwara in his ambush exclaimed within himself: Ha! wonderful beyond imagination is the craft of women, and above all, of the one before me! For now, so far is he from dreaming that he was brought here expressly for her purpose, that she has convinced him that he is an interloper, indebted to her grace, and she has even filled him with the nectar of unutterable delight, by allowing him to suppose that she permits him to remain!

XI

But in the meanwhile, the King exclaimed piteously: O daughter of King Mitra, well indeed I know, that I am only an intruder: out upon me, if I was tempted to forget it, even for a moment! And yet I was not without excuse, for how could I remember anything whatever, with a mind bewildered by the colour of thy great eyes? But now, I will swear to keep myself within any bound or limit that thou choosest to impose, so only that thou dost not bid me go away. For then I could not answer for myself, and sorely indeed should I be tempted to disobey thee, though I long for nothing so much, as to obey any orders whatever, so only that they are thine.

And she said: On these terms, I will allow thee to remain: though, should I perceive any

symptom of disobedience, I shall immediately go away myself: as in any case, I must do, as soon as the Guru has arrived.

And the King said, carelessly: There is no longer need for any Guru, for I have altogether changed my mind, on the matter which he was commissioned to discuss.

And then, she laughed joyfully, and exclaimed: Aha! O King, much I fear, that thou, who but an hour ago, wast ready to bring charges of lightness and frivolity against every member of my sex, art thyself more changeful and inconstant than any woman of us all. For here art thou, changing thy mind once more, no longer about women and their crimes, but even about matters of state-policy, and all in but a moment. Art thou not ashamed of thyself, and in presence of a woman? And the King said: O thou beautiful and tormenting being, I am not in the least ashamed: for it is all thy fault, and thy doing, and thou art the cause of all. And now I wish from the very bottom of my heart, that thou wert thyself the Guru. For I wish

to transact no business of any kind, except with thee: and moreover, the concern is far less, in this matter, with the Guru than with thee.

And she thought for a moment, and she said: And what if I were actually the Guru? What then? Come, what can be so easy as to gratify thy wish? Shall we, like children, make believe? Suppose me, if thou canst, to be the Guru, and tell me, what is thy business of State.

And she changed, all at once, her position, and sat, as though upon the carpet of a Durbar, cross-legged, assuming an air of dignity, with mock solemnity, as if preparing to listen with profound attention to what he was about to say. And as he watched her, the heart of Yogeshwara in his ambush almost burst within him, and he exclaimed within himself: Ha! Surely I am a baby, in matters of diplomacy, compared with this extraordinary woman! For she has reached, at a single bound, the very object of her meeting, and has actually presented herself to him, in

her true capacity, spreading open, as it were, the very truth naked before his eyes, without his so much as suspecting anything at all!

XII

But in the meanwhile, the King gazed at her, intoxicated with admiration and delight. And he murmured to himself: Where has the woman gone, of whom, at first, I think, I was actually afraid? For now she has turned, so to speak, into a child, playing at a game. And all at once, he began to tremble. For like a flash of lightning, the dark ocean of love-rapture in which he was plunged suddenly became illuminated with a ray of sunlight in the form of hope, so that he said to himself: Am I mistaken, or is she a little kinder than she was? And all at once, a thought came into his heart. And he leaned towards her, and said: Dear little Guru, thou art new to state-affairs, of which the first axiom is this, that the discussion of matters of importance demands above all things ab-

solute secrecy, and freedom from interruption. Is there no attendant of thine somewhere within call, whom we might summon, and bid him tell the true Guru, that he is not required, until our deliberation is concluded?

And hearing him speak, the King's daughter broke into a peal of laughter. And suddenly abandoning all her dignity, she began to clap her hands in delight, looking at him joyously, as if she were really nothing but a child. And she exclaimed: Ah! thou art crafty, and cunning indeed. Ah! that would indeed be a stroke of policy, to oust the true Guru in favour of the sham. But, O King Chand, I fear that it cannot be. Thou must resign thyself to making the best of the time still at thy disposal, afforded thee by his delay. Therefore lay thy matter very quickly before me, for due consideration.

And the King said: O most reverend Guru, I came here to deliberate on certain preliminary difficulties, in the matter of thy father's submission to myself. For he is, of all the kings, the only one that has not yet

submitted. Then she said: But what if he should refuse? Then said Chand: He will not refuse, for if he did, I should compel him, by force. And he will never bring the matter to that test, for well he knows, that my strength is a hundred times greater than his own. Aye! had he dreamed of resistance, I should have been delighted: and we should long ago have swept him away, as an angry river does a blade of straw.

And she looked furtively at him as he spoke, saying to herself: Now he is himself, no longer like a bashful lover, but resembling that great copper-coloured eagle that recently swept by us as it searched for prey. And as he thinks of a battle, he has for the moment forgotten all about me, proud, and confident of his own strength. And then, as the King looked at her, she placed her finger on the very point of her chin, and said: O King, this is a matter requiring for its settlement age, and experience, and policy of the very deepest kind. And therefore the King my master entrusted it to me, as being, in all his

dominions, the oldest and most crafty of his advisers.

And she looked at the King with a smile, while Yogeshwara in his ambush laughed to himself for joy: saying to himself: She is utterly deceiving him, by telling him the very truth. But the King said: O wrinkled, grey-haired Guru, sure I am, that the King thy master could not possibly have entrusted the matter to a more irresistible negotiator than thyself, whose years are a guarantee for thy incomparable dexterity. Then she said, looking at him with large eyes full of grave reproof: Such compliments are, we know, the indispensable preliminary in all negotiations, meaning, as their employers know well, absolutely nothing at all. And the King said: Dear Guru, thou art altogether mistaken. For I do not speak by proxy, but am my own ambassador, and therefore empower myself to say exactly what I mean, as in this instance. Then she said: Let us pass over all preliminaries, and come to the business in hand. Can we not offer inducements

to the enemy, whom we are not strong enough to meet in the field, to come to terms? And the King said eagerly: Aye! that you can. For often, on the very eve of battle, timely alliances and bribes have warded off disaster; and for this very purpose it was, that, as I think, kings' daughters were invented by the Creator. For many times, the gift of a daughter has turned an enemy into a friend. Then she said: Ah! but in this case, such an expedient is altogether futile, and out of the question. For King Chand is known to be an enemy of women, and kings' daughters are, after all, only women, and therefore less than nothing, and of no value in his eyes. And the King said hastily: Sweet Guru, thy spies have misinformed thee, and led thee astray. For I can positively assure thee that circumstances of very recent occurrence have so altered the complexion of King Chand's opinions, that the offer of a daughter by King Mitra would certainly render all submission entirely superfluous. Go back and tell thy master, that King Chand would infinitely

prefer his daughter to his submission, or anything whatever in the world.

And she looked at him, gravely shaking at him her pretty head, and she said, with indecision in her voice. O Intruder, remember! and beware! It is time now, to bring this game to a conclusion. For what is it, after all, but child's-play? And it is even more than time for the true Guru to appear. And the King exclaimed: Nay, dearest Guru, not so. For I swear to thee, that though the game might be a game, my terms are no jest. And she said: Then, as Guru, I reply: Who shall convince King Mitra, and still more, his daughter, that King Chand has changed his mind? For in love, as in war, promises may be deception, and oaths but a snare.

XIII

And then, as Chand suddenly rose to his feet, and stood up, she also started up, exclaiming: O King, stand still now, for a little while, and listen to me. And as she stood, with each hand firmly clenched beside her, and her head thrown back upon her shoulders, she resembled a picture of determination. And she turned just a little paler, and her eyes grew just a little darker, as she fixed her glance upon the King. And Yogeshwara, as he watched her from his ambush, said with anxiety to himself: What in the world is she going to do now? For she has completely gained her end, and brought the negotiation to a successful issue; and now all she has to do is, to break off the interview and go away: and everything will settle of its own

accord for our advantage. Can it be, that having hitherto played her part with the most consummate skill, she is just about to spoil all by some false step, or, that as her sex gave her victory, so now it is going to tempt her into losing all gained, by some unhappy blunder, springing from feminine caprice? Or does she, for all her cleverness, not yet understand, that the essence of all wisdom lies in knowing where to stop?

So then, as Chand watched her, also with anxiety, all unaware of what was passing in her mind, she said: O King Chand, it may very well be, that should you make your proposal to the King my father, he will accept it, to secure his own advantage. For many times a daughter has been sacrificed, to save a State; tossed like a ball backwards and forwards from hand to hand, and like a bag of money, changing owners in the market, with no voice in the matter of its own. But now there is another person to be considered. For since the beginning, it has been the privilege of all kings' daughters to choose their

husbands for themselves.[1] And though my father may be willing, and even all too willing, to close with your offer, and hand me over like a cow to the best bidder, perhaps I may not be equally pleased with the bargain myself. And what guarantee canst thou give me, that I shall not be a loser in the matter, and a victim, and a dupe?

And as she spoke, she fixed her eyes sternly on the King, as though to search him, with penetrating interrogation in their glance. And the King said sorrowfully: Alas! dear Guru, what can I say to thee to convince thee of my sincerity? And she said, with energy: Nay, in this matter, I am no Guru, but like thee, my own ambassador. And what hast thou to say, then, for thyself? Thou art a known enemy of women. And hast thou, then, any ground for thy dislike? Hast thou bought thy bad wisdom in the market of experience, and drawn thy bad opinion of my sex from association with evil specimens of

[1] This is the *swayamwara,* or *self-choice of a bridegroom,* everywhere exemplified in old Hindoo tales.

womankind? And as she spoke, she shot at him a glance that resembled a flash of dark lightning in the form of suspicion, and entered his soul like a sword. And the King said earnestly: May I never see thee again, if I have any such experience at all: for I do assure thee, that I have hardly ever seen, much less spoken to, any woman but thyself.

And as he stood, with his hand stretched towards her, and timidity mixed with entreaty in his eyes, she plunged into them her own, as if endeavouring to read to the very bottom of his heart. And all at once, she sighed a little sigh, as if with unutterable relief. And she sank back, changing suddenly all over as it were from the hardest stone into a substance softer than the foam of the sea. And her clenched hands relaxed, opening like flowers, and the cloud vanished from her face, and there came into her eyes a smile that ran as it were like sunshine over her whole body. And she exclaimed: Why, then, thou art altogether fraudulent. And pray, by what authority didst thou dare to assume, like a severe

judge, the right of condemning all women in the lump, never having had anything to do with them? And the King said: I learned my lesson from my father, and with him was my whole life passed, in camps, and battle-fields, and the chase of wild beasts. Then she said: Thou hast indeed something in thee of the wild animals amongst which thou hast lived, and art in sore need of training in gentler arts. And could I but consider thee a true diamond, I have half a mind to be thy polisher, myself.

And she looked at the King with eyes, in which the sweetness was within a very little of affection. And instantly, fire leaped from the King's heart, and ran like a flame all through him. And he exclaimed: Ah! with thee for my teacher, I would very quickly learn anything whatever. Then she said: Go back, O Intruder, to thy seat: for it is not good for the pupil to be in too great a proximity to his Guru:[1] and I will give thee thy first lesson.

[1] This is substantially a quotation from Manu: only it

And as the King returned joyously to his seat, she took her flower basket, and turning it over, emptied all its remaining flowers upon the floor. And choosing one from among them, she placed the basket, upside down, a little way from the King, and seated herself upon it, with the flower in her hand. And she said: Now the judge is on the seat of judgment, to try thee. And yonder is my garland, and now it is to be determined, whether thou art worthy to have it placed about thy neck,[1] or not.

And Yogeshwara in his ambush said softly to himself: Now she is playing with him, after the manner of her sex. And who knows, whether it has not come about, that the biter has been bit, and the snarer taken in the snare, and she has partly fallen in love with him herself: as well she might. For love is dan-

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is not the Guru, but the Guru's wife, whom the pupil is there forbidden to approach. The princess plays upon the sex.

[1] In the *swayamwara* ceremony, the mark of selection was the placing of a garland around the successful wooer's neck, by the hands of the bride herself.

gerous, and double-edged, and catching, like a fever, and it will be long before she sees another, better fitted than this young lion's cub, to touch her heart. And she looks at him now, not as she did before, but as if she were beginning to wish to coax him, and to tease him, and to play the tyrant over him, as much as he wishes it himself. For the longing that stretches, as it were, imploring hands towards her, out of his intoxicated eyes, resembles a whirlpool, out of which she may not find it easy, and perhaps does not even desire, to escape.

XIV

So she sat awhile, looking at him with mischief in her laughing eyes, at which he gazed with senses that began to leave him out of joy. And all at once, she held up before him the lily in her hand. And she said: Dost thou recognise this flower? And the King looked at it carefully, bending forward half to see it, half in order to get closer to the hand that held it up. And he said: No: it is a flower of a kind very singular indeed, and of strange beauty, that I have never seen before. Then she said: It is my flower, chosen by me, and preferred to all the others, to be mine, and like myself, a native of the hills. And if ever, in any former birth, I was myself a flower, beyond a doubt, I was this: for as I see it, when I wander in the forest, I am drawn as it were towards it, whether I will or no, and it speaks to me, in its lan-

guage, of a long forgotten state when we were one. And now, canst thou employ it in battle as a sword? And yet, for all that, is it good for nothing? Then he said: O Guru, I see thy meaning and thy malice. It would indeed be a folly and a sin, to employ the sweet flower as a sword. And were it mine, I would place it in a shrine, and worship it as it deserves, since it exactly resembles the hood of the snake that overshadows Maheshwara, save only that it is white.[1] And now, since it is thy flower, it shall also be mine. Then she said: But as yet it is not thine. And whether I give it thee, or not, depends on my decision in thy case. And I incline to think, not. For it is but an hour, since thou wert ready to condemn all flowers whatever as things of naught, only because the poor

[1] A species of Arisæma, which we call "cobra-lily," and the natives, *snake-root*. Though there are many flowers intrinsically more beautiful, I do not know one more quaintly original, than this: shooting up, in dark wet woods, by roots of trees, old walls, or among dead leaves, pure and white and lonely and strangely suggestive of some wild individuality, silently symbolical of old sweet stories of Naiads and Dryads and Russian Rusalkas and Heine Loreleis.

flowers were not swords. And the King said: Dear Guru, be not hasty and unjust. Could he be blamed for not appreciating flowers that had never seen one in his life? Then she said: And what, then, had he seen one, and only one? Much I fear, lest, once having experienced the sweetness of one flower, he might be tempted to run riot among them all.

And the King said, with emphasis: Guru, thy fear is vain, and void of substance, and like my own antipathy before.

And she stooped, and picked up at random another flower from the floor. And she said: See! is not this one just as beautiful and tempting as the first? But the King put up his hands before his eyes, exclaiming: I will not even look at it at all. Then she said, softly: Who will believe the bee, that swore a deadly feud against all flowers, now swearing to confine himself to one? Are not all bees naturally rovers, and hard to satiate, such is their appetite for variety? And he said: I know nothing of the bees, but this

I know, that for myself, I want no flower but one. Then she said: And for how long? And he said: For a *yuga.* And she exclaimed: What! only a single *yuga?*[1] And he said: A *kalpa.* And she said: Thy desire for the flower has then, after all, a limit, if a long one? And the King said: Multiply *yuga* by *yuga,* and *kalpa* by *kalpa,* it is the same.

And she said: And what, during all these *yugas* and *kalpas,* wouldst thou be doing with thy flower? And he said: Nay, I will show thee, then, when it is mine. Of what use are the words of one unworthy of belief?

And she waited for a while, with a hesitation compounded half of indecision, half of the wish to keep him in suspense. And then all at once she laughed, and blushed, and threw the flower towards him, saying: Come, I will try thee, for a single *yuga.* And if, at its end, my flower is still with thee, who knows what I may give thee in the next?

[1] (Pronounce *yuga* and *kalpa* as monosyllables, to rhyme with *fugue* and *pulp.*) A *yuga* is, as we should say, a geological Age: a *kalpa,* a whole series of such ages.

XV

And then, as the King seized the flower with avidity, and put it to his lips, looking at her with longing eyes, she looked back at him for a single instant with the shadow of a smile trembling on the very corner of her lips: and then all at once, it vanished, and she dropped her eyes, and just a very little colour came into her cheek. And so, for a while, they remained silent; she with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and he with his own fastened upon her face. And there was dead silence in that arbour, just as if nobody was there. Only the humming of the bees seemed as it were to murmur to them, like the echo of their own thoughts, which neither dared to speak. And the wind sighed in the valley, and died away, leaving behind it a silence greater than before, in which they heard nothing but the beating of their own hearts.

And all at once, she rose abruptly from her basket, as if half-frightened at the very silence, and moved away, a little way, towards the edge of the abyss. And at that moment, the King suddenly struck his hand upon his knee. And he exclaimed, Ha! so vehemently, that she started, and turned and stood, looking at him, in alarm. And she said, in a voice that faltered with timidity: What is the matter? And the King exclaimed: Alas! dearest Guru, I have frightened thee. And yet I think, that I shall frighten thee again, as often as I can, so much does thy fear become thee. Then she said: But what caused thee to exclaim? And he said: I have made a discovery. Then she said, with a smile: And what hast thou discovered? And the King said: Alas! now all thy beautiful timidity has flown away. And with reason: for thou hast little indeed to fear, so long as I am near thee. Aye! woe to whatever threatens thee, while I am by thy side! But as to my discovery, it is, that thou art an impostor and a cheat.

And she looked at him, fixedly, turning just

a little paler: and she said: I do not understand. Then he said: Here all this while, I have been before thee like a culprit, rated by thee for my opinion of thy sex: and reduced to utter shame before thee, falsely representing thyself to be a woman. And as I looked at thee, all at once, like a sudden flash of lightning, the truth appeared: and now I know thee to be a rogue, and a cheat, and not a woman after all. And now I am redeemed, in my own eyes, and feel no longer any shame at being drawn against my will to one who has absolutely no claim to be classed among the sex.

And she laughed, as if with relief; and she said: What, then, am I, if not a woman? And the King said: How can I tell? But doubtless thou art some mountain incarnation of loveliness and fascination, distinct and altogether different from the race of men and women, and peculiar to thyself. And now I have a great mind to punish thee for thy villainy, in falsely playing the woman for my confusion.

And she laughed again, softly, and said:

What wilt thou do to me, to punish me, for I am at thy mercy? And the King said: Thou speakest truly: for see! I could crush thee to pieces with this hand, or throw thee from the cliff. And yet, that were indeed a sin, and I should resemble one placing his heel upon a flower. Nay, but I will presently go to thy father, and bid him cast thee into prison, for luring to destruction strangers that come by invitation to his capital, against his own safe-conduct. And now I am sorely tempted to look upon thee as a Yakshi, or a Rákshasi, devouring human bodies, and doubtless, Yogeshwara is thy agent, who draws travellers to thy den, and I myself thy victim, only the last of many, whose bones it may be lie scattered at the foot of yonder cliff.

And Yogeshwara said, within his ambush: Now, without knowing it, he is getting very dangerously close to the truth, and his words, undesignedly, will touch her to the quick.

XVI

And she was silent for a while, and then she said with a sigh: What! am I then to thee but a Rákshasi, and only an impostor? And the King said: Dear Guru, every Rákshasi can assume at will a form of more than mortal beauty, and this very beauty of thine makes thee suspicious in my eyes, for nothing like it was ever seen. And yet I would rather be devoured by thee than die in any other way, or fall, as is probable, in battle.

And she looked at him a moment, and then she said: Thou art very young, and as I think, hardly older than myself: and hast thou, then, been present in many battles? And he said: In some. Then she said: How is it, then, that thou art still alive? And the King laughed, and said: Dearest little Guru, there would be no battles, if in every battle all were

killed. And she said: But thy own father was killed in battle, and one day, it may be thy case also. And Chand said: Who knows? For some fall, on their very first field: and others spend their whole lives on battle-fields, and Death flies from them continually, as if he was afraid of them himself. Or, it may be, he chooses whom he pleases. Then she said: And art thou, then, not afraid, lest he should choose thee?

And Chand looked at her, for a while, in silence. And all at once he said: Who can escape what is written on his forehead? And if a brave man fall in battle, what harm? For he must die somehow, and in that case, at any rate, the Apsaras appointed for him waits, to carry off his soul. But I have found my Apsaras, while I am alive. Ha! and now that I bethink me, surely that is what thou art. Aye! doubtless I am dead, having died somehow or other, unawares, and thou art the very Apsaras that has come to fetch away my soul. And who knows but that this arbour of thine is a very bit of

heaven, lifted as it is above the lower world, among the clouds?

And all at once, she exclaimed, with emphasis: Never shall the Apsarases take thee. Thou shalt never fight on any battle-field again. And then again, she stopped short, while the colour rushed over her face like dawn. And instantly, the King started to his feet, exclaiming with rapture: Ah! Guru of my heart! What! would my death displease thee? And she said, with confusion: Nay, I did but fear for thy life, on some future day. But look! where my flower lies, that I gave thee, to treasure for a *yuga*. Already dost thou neglect it? For in his emotion, the King had thrown it to the ground. And she said again: See! in the confusion caused by matters of more moment, how the poor flower falls neglected to the ground!

XVII

And the King picked the flower up, and laid it carefully upon the seat. And he said: Lie thou there, my flower, securely: I will see to it, that thou dost never fall to the ground again. And then, he turned to the King's daughter, and made a step towards her, with such determination, that she drew back in alarm. And she faltered, half in play and half in fear: Beware! O Intruder: thou art transgressing the conditions. But the King swept away her expostulation with a wave of his hand. And he exclaimed: Nay, I care not any longer whether I am here by right or wrong: it is enough that I am here, and thou art there. And well didst thou ask me, whether I feared to fall in battle like my father. For never hitherto had I fear of any kind, but at thy very question, I suddenly

understood that I was changed. Did I not say, thou wert a witch, transforming me into another man by spells? For now I know I am a coward, and afraid to die, since should I die, I should never see thee any more. And all at once he stooped, till his left hand rested on her basket, to look up into her face, which was turned towards the ground. And he said with a voice that shook with emotion: Dear Guru, come, wilt thou not choose me, and throw round my neck the garland of thy choice? And I will be thy slave, and do everything according to thy bidding, and abandon, if thou wilt, my battles and my kingdom and my life, and every other thing, counting the world as grass, only to sit beside thee and listen to thy voice, and watch thee, and thy eyes and thy hands and thy hair and whatever else is thine and part of thee. Aye! and what does it matter, if formerly I thought lightly of thy sex? I was but a fool, that did not know, and now I will make up to thee for all, and serve thee, and follow thee about, and obey thee like a dog. Aye! I

have cast my whole life into the fire, and thrown it behind me like a dream, out of which I have awoken, as thou hast waked me, with a start: for now I see that it was horrible, and black, and cold and vain and worthless; for what is any life in which thou art not but a death, and worse than any death, to have seen thee, and to be without thee, even for an hour. Aye! now I know, though then I knew it not, that the very first moment I set eyes on thee, I ceased to be myself, for it is thou that art myself, and my soul, and without thee I am nothing but a corpse. Only tell me what there is of me which thou dost not like, and I will change it, if only thou wilt help me: for thou art powerful to change. For I am very rude, and need teaching, and thou shalt teach me anything thou wilt. And if there is anything thou longest for, I will search the world to bring it to thy feet, and fetch for thee no matter what from the very bottom of the sea. Only let me serve thee, no matter how: see, I am very strong, and if thou wilt, will carry thee about; and O,

that only someone would attack thee, that I might show thee by experience that I could fight for thee like never another in the world! Aye! death itself would be delicious, were it only given as a ransom for thy life.

XVIII

So as he spoke, she listened, standing as if rooted to the ground, with a bosom that rose and fell in agitation, and eyes that did not dare to leave the floor. And when he ended, all at once, she looked up. And she cast a single glance, rapid as a flash of lightning, at his face, that resembled the face of one that begged for mercy, for his eyes were full of tears; and then once more she bounded like a deer towards the cliff, and stood again upon its very verge, with her back towards him, looking out over the gorge. And all at once she stooped, and covered her face with her hands. And so she stood awhile; and at last, she took her hands from her face, and turned round.

And she looked at the King, with hard eyes, and a face paler than the ashes on the body of a Pashupata ascetic. And she said, very

low, and very clear, and very slowly: O King Chand, the Guru has arrived.

And instantly, the King turned like lightning to the door. And seeing nothing, he listened, and he said: Here there is nobody. Then she looked at him strangely, and said again: There is no Guru. I am myself the Guru. And as he continued to gaze at her, in perplexity, not understanding, she continued: O King Chand, thy original opinions about women were, after all, the truth. For a woman is after all, nothing, but a mass of deception, and a traitor, and now I have betrayed thee, and led thee straight into a trap.

And as the King still remained gazing silently at her in amazement, she said yet again: Thou hast all along imagined, that I was here by a chance, and our meeting was unpremeditated, and accidental: and yet it is not so. For I came here by express design and policy, to catch thee: and Yogeshwara led thee to my arbour by my advice and prearrangement, hoping to hook thee, and snare thee, by means of me, the bait and the decoy,

in the meshes of his policy, making thee his instrument by means of me. And now, thou hast learned a lesson, and verified thy faith by experience, and thy dislike of women is, as thou seest, altogether solid, and founded on the truth.

And as she ended, the King stood staring at her, in a stupor, and like one whose senses have been annihilated by an overwhelming blow. And he saw before him not the woman that she was immediately before, but another altogether different. For her face resembled a very beautiful and stony mask, ice-cold, suddenly put on, as it were to hide the soul concealed below.

So as he stood, recollection suddenly came back into his heart. And he said to himself: Thus, then, the very thing predicted by my ministers, has actually occurred. And like a silly fowl, I have actually rushed into the trap, so skilfully prepared by Yogeshwara to catch me, with open eyes, forewarned.

And at the thought of Yogeshwara, all at once, pride, and utter shame, and rage rushed

as it were all together into his soul, and the blood left his heart, and surged up into his brow, and lifted the very hair upon his head. And suddenly, he bowed before the King's daughter, standing absolutely still before him, like a picture painted on a wall. And he said slowly: King Mitra is very fortunate in possessing such a minister, and such a daughter; and I did very wrong, in remaining even for a single instant, in an arbour to which I never should have come.

And then, he turned, and left the arbour. And she stood, absolutely still, watching him go.

XIX

So as he went away, the soul of Yogeshwara, in his ambush, almost leaped from his body, so extreme was his rage, and disgust, and disappointment, to see him go. And he exclaimed within himself: Ha! what! am I awake, or only dreaming? What! after lifting the matter to the very topmost pinnacle of success, has she actually dashed it, with a single stroke, to the very bottom, making everything worse by far than it was at the beginning? Is she mad, or what in the world can be the matter with her? Ha! now she has very effectually ruined herself, and her father, and me, and the kingdom, and all. Could she not hold her woman's tongue, and keep the secret? Ha! now indeed, all is lost. For now like a mad elephant he will be back upon us, in a very little while, to wreak his

rage upon us all, and tear up the kingdom and the tree of my policy, by its very roots. Fool that I was, to stake all upon the discretion of a girl!

And all at once, he stopped short, struck with the thunderbolt of astonishment at the behaviour of the King's daughter. For when the King was gone, she stood awhile, looking at the door, by which he had disappeared, motionless as a tree, and turning paler and ever paler, till her face resembled the marble floor on which she stood. And suddenly she turned round. And as fate would have it, at that moment, her eyes fell on the seat, where he sat, and on the flower, that lay there, exactly as he placed it, when he lifted it with such affection from the floor. And she looked at it, for a single instant, and all at once, she flung herself upon her knees, with her face buried in her two arms, that rested on her basket, and she began to sob, as if, her heart being broken, she was about to break herself in pieces also.

And as he watched her, tears of compassion

for her and her condition arose, as if against his will, in Yogeshwara's soul: for he had a daughter of his own. And he gazed at her distracted, and seizing his right ear with his hand, he began to pull it, utterly confounded and perplexed as to what was to be done. And he said within himself: Surely some assistance should be rendered to this unhappy maiden, no matter what blame she has incurred by her incomprehensible and utterly disastrous behaviour. For she seems about to abandon the body, in grief about something or other, as great as I have ever witnessed in my life. And yet if I go to her assistance, it will come out that I was a party to their interview, and that will never do. And yet I cannot stay here and watch her, as it were, dying before my eyes, in the very agony of grief.

XX

And then, once again he stopped short, and so great was his amazement that he came within a very little of betraying himself by a loud exclamation. For as he looked, lo! the King appeared again, standing in the door, having returned unheard with silent steps. And as he stood, he looked towards the King's daughter, all unaware of his return. And when he saw that she was sobbing, like a very incarnation of despair, all at once his face was lit up as it were by the ecstasy of joy. And he went noiselessly, on tiptoe, towards her, and when he reached her, he stood for a moment looking down at her, with compassion that was mingled with unutterable affection. And then, he stooped down, and touched her on the shoulder, very gently, with his hand.

And at his touch, she started to her feet,

and stood, with downcast eyes, from which great tears rolled, chasing one another, along her cheeks, and a bosom that heaved like the ocean after a storm. And the colour came and went upon her face, like the shadows of the clouds driven furiously over the hillsides by a strong wind.

And the King leaned towards her, and said softly: See, it is fated, that I cannot leave thy arbour, however often I may try. And now, thou art mistaken. For it was my old opinions of women that are wrong, and my new ones that are right. And now, dear Guru, wilt thou choose me for thy husband, or not?

And as he stretched his hands towards her, she glanced at him, and all at once, she lost control over herself, and abandoned, as it were, the dominion of her soul to him. And she fell into his arms, and remained, sobbing on his breast, and quivering with emotion, and joy, and shame, while the whole world swam in mist before the eyes of the King, trembling like a leaf in the whirlwind of passion roused

by her agitation and her surrender and her touch. And after a while, he said: Listen, for I wish to ask thee a question, and tell thee why it was that I returned. For it was not only thy beauty that drew me back again, though that alone would have made it utterly impossible for me to go away: notwithstanding Yogeshwara, whom, at the thought of his deception, I was ready to strangle with my own hands. But all at once, as I went, I stopped. And I said: Ha! why did she betray herself, and tell me, when she had completely gained her object, what without her, I myself should never have discovered? Could it be, because her heart smote her, to receive the husband of her choice?

And then, with a cry, she gripped him by the arm. And she sobbed aloud as she exclaimed: Ah! thou hast guessed it, thou hast guessed. Ah! till I knew thee, to deceive thee seemed to be a little thing. And fool! I laid a snare for thee, never dreaming of danger to myself, nor thinking that I should be the first myself to fall into the snare, laid for me by

the Deity in thy dear form. And as I looked at thee, and listened to thee pleading, all ignorant of my deception, all at once I became a thing of horror to myself, and saw myself a traitor, to thee. Ah! no, not to thee. Ah! to thee, to thee, ah! to thee I could not lie.

XXI

So those two lovers stood together in that arbour on the edge of the hill, not knowing where they were, and all ignorant of time. And the King's daughter sobbed, until she laughed, and laughed until she sobbed, till at length the King took her in his arms, and seating himself in his old seat, set her on his lap, and held her like a child, rocking her to and fro, and wishing that her agitation might never have an end, so only that he might continue rocking her for ever on his knee.

And at last, becoming once more mistress of herself, she said to him in a whisper: Thou didst well to return, without losing any time. For hadst thou remained absent but a very little longer, I would have thrown myself to the bottom of the cliff, and then they would have found there not, as thou saidst, thy bones,

but mine. But as it is, I am alive, to be already a burden to thee, and as yet, the *yuga* has only just begun. And he said: O burden, I am not in any hurry to set thee down. And I will carry my flower, thou shalt find, to the *yuga's* very furthest end.

And as he spoke, she turned in his arms, and looked towards the flower, and she said, very low: When, after thy departure, suddenly I saw the flower that I gave thee lying, left by thee, despised, alone, there came into my heart such an agony, that death itself would have been relief. And the King said, with emotion: I will build for it a shrine of gold: but as for thee, thy shrine is in my heart. But now, O Guru of my heart, there is still something to be done: for thou hast not yet placed thy garland on my neck.

And instantly she jumped up and brought it. And she said: With my own hands, I wove it for thee, and the charm that I sang to it, unknown to thee, for thee, has produced its result. And as the King stood before her, she reached up, with a smile, on tiptoe, and

put the garland round his neck, together with the other garland of the creeper of her arms. And the King drew her, with his own arms, towards him, and their souls met upon their lips, and lost in each other, became inextricably united, in the paradise-oblivion of a kiss without an end.

And old Yogeshwara, in his ambush, said softly to himself, with tears in his eyes: Now it is time for me to go, for now I am superfluous; and this is the end, and the battle is won. And she was right, and I was wrong; and she alone knew her way to the only true and perfect end, without which all was incomplete; and I am nothing but an old fool. And in my folly I actually ventured to chide her, and reprove her, not perceiving that it was not she, but I, who was to blame, coming within a very little of utterly destroying all, by my presumptuous and impertinent interference, unable to appreciate her incomparable skill, and conceitedly deeming myself a better

judge as to how this matter ought to be conducted to a successful termination, than herself: as if a woman and the Deity of Love did not know how to manage their own business better than all the grey-haired dotards in the three great worlds!

A Cordial Understanding

A Cordial Understanding

And the very next morning, King Mitra's capital went as it were wild with joy, with smiles in the form of red banners hung from every housetop, and laughter in the form of drums beaten in every street, and shouts of victory in every mouth: since all had heard that King Chand was going to marry the King's daughter, and so would the hereditary enemy become a friend.[1] And the marriage was celebrated with all its rites, with speed that did not however keep pace with King Chand's impatience, who almost lost his reason on account of the delay of the astrologers in fixing the auspicious day. And as soon as

[1] The *upahára sandhi*, or alliance produced by a gift from one of the contracting parties, is, according to Wishnusharma, of the fourteen different kinds of alliance, the best. I have selected *Cordial Understanding* as its nearest equivalent.

he had led his bride with trembling hand around the fire, he took her away to his own home.

And as he went away, Yogeshwara said to him, at the city gate: O King Chand, dost thou bear a grudge against the old minister that lured thee into a snare? And Chand laughed, and said: O Yogeshwara, I wish I had a minister like thee. And as to the grudge, I owe thee what I am anxious to repay. Come to my capital below, when thou hast leisure, and ask me for anything whatever of most value to thee in the three worlds, and it is thine. And Yogeshwara said instantly: I choose thy bride. And Chand laughed again, and said: It is well chosen: and now I see, that thy reputation for wisdom is well deserved. Nevertheless, thou wilt have to choose again, for thou hast asked for the only thing I will not give.

So then, as they went away, Yogeshwara said softly to himself: Now, were I only a young man, my fortune would be made. But as it is, I am old, and my work is done: and

I have attained the fruit of my birth. And see! how the Deity, in this case, as frequently before, has brought about things contrary to all expectation, and such as no man could have believed even to be possible, by the very simplest means. For King Chand and his son have done nothing all their lives, but subdue the regions of the earth: whereas King Mitra has done absolutely nothing, except marry a wife and beget a daughter. And yet, aided by my policy, this daughter has, like a wishing-tree, dropped all Chand's gains into our lap, and so far from losing anything, we have gained all. So much more powerful has proved this slender digit of the moon than all the fury of the sun. And now, then, I will put off the burden of the State, and spend the days that still remain to me in accumulating merit, by penance and austerities.

And he handed over everything to his son, and becoming a pilgrim, went to Wáránasi. And there he took up his station on the margin of the holy stream, and sat there, motionless and speechless, till he died. And they made

a pyre and burned him on the Ghàt: and his soul entered another body, while the ashes of the old one floated down the river, and were lost at last in the waters of the sea.

And then, Maheshwara stopped.

And after a while, the Daughter of the Mountain said softly: O Moony-Crested, thy story, after all, proves absolutely nothing. For beyond a doubt, Chand would have loved his beautiful and crafty mountain-bride every whit as much, had she never committed any fault at all.

Then said the God: O Daughter of the Snow, thou art altogether mistaken. For the fact that he had, as it were, to forgive her for a fault, in the very crisis and ecstasy of his passion, increased it not merely a hundred, but a thousand-fold, and enriched it with a sweetness which otherwise it could never have possessed. And so it is in every other case: for therein lies the flattery of sex.[1] And each

[1] *Abhimánika* is a piece of profound psychology, utterly beyond translation. It means the intense self-gratification, or egoistic pride felt by either lover, conscious of

sex loves the other better, if it love at all, for having something to forgive. For nothing augments affection so much as the forgiveness of its object. And the tests of love are only two, the power of recollection, and the capacity to forgive. For false love forgets at once, and cannot forgive at all. But love that is really love forgives for ever, and never forgets.

Then said the mountain goddess: But in what, then, lies the superiority of sex to sex, and man to woman? And why is not he a mine of faults, as well as she?

And as she spoke, she was conscious of a change: and all at once she looked, and found that she was lying, not on the Great God's breast, but on the green side of a hill. And instantly she exclaimed, in a pet: Now he has cheated me again, suddenly substituting this green hill for his own body, and going

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monopolising the other's love, in being that other's adequate and reciprocal opposite and satisfaction: the strange and sweet emotion, half bashful, half triumphant; that seethes and bubbles in a young man's soul, when first a woman falls in love with him.

somewhere else, leaving me in the lurch, without an answer to my doubt. And now I shall have to wait, until he chooses to return. And doubtless he thinks, that after a little while, I shall have utterly forgotten all about it; but on the contrary, I will very carefully remember to make him answer, and I will take my hair down, and keep it so, until he does. And in the meantime, I will go, and listen to my own praises; and show myself, it may be, for a moment, in return for them, to my worshippers in the Windhya hills.

THE END

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